

ABSTRACT

COLLINS, MARCUS L. Navigating the Academy: Lumbee Indian Students and Higher Education. (Under the direction of Dr. Audrey J. Jaeger).

The experiences of American Indian students in higher education need to be further understood. Existing literature often operates from a deficit model to explain why American Indian students fail to persist. While this information is needed, additional insight is needed into the experiences of those students who successfully navigate the academy and attain their college degrees. This case study, informed by narrative inquiry, utilized qualitative interviews with 16 Lumbee Indian graduates from a predominantly White university (PWI) to ascertain the nature of their experience and what they attributed to their success. The theoretical lens of transculturation was utilized as it states American Indian students use their culture as an anchor for success to ground their experiences within a PWI. Findings indicate the Lumbee students in this study developed a community of support which consisted of American Indian faculty and staff, student organizations with an American Indian focus and campus departments and offices with a focus on providing a sense of place and outreach to American Indian students. The home communities of these students remained a constant source of support for the students as well. Implications for policy, practice, research and the theory of transculturation are included.

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Navigating the Academy: Lumbee Indian Students and Higher Education

by
Marcus L. Collins

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APPROVED BY:

Audrey Jaeger
Committee Chair

Sue Barcinas

Susan C. Faircloth

Carrie Zelna

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all my students, but in particular the American Indian students who work to attain an education in order to better themselves and their communities. To the participants of this study, I trust I have represented you well and I offer my sincere thanks for your contributions. It is your voice that has enabled me to strengthen mine through this research and I am forever indebted to you. I am, because of you.

BIOGRAPHY

Marcus L. Collins was born to Willie and Helen Collins in 1974. He is a proud member of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina. He grew up with a very close-knit community of family and friends in rural Robeson County just outside of Pembroke among the Lumbee. A first-generation college student, he completed his undergraduate degree at Pembroke State University and later his master's degree at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP), a historically American Indian university. During his graduate study he was also employed full-time by UNCP which was the beginning of his professional career in higher education. After completing his graduate studies he moved to the Raleigh-Durham area to continue his professional career as the Assistant Dean with the Center for Student Success and Academic Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which he currently still holds. Additionally, he assumed the role of Director of the UNC Summer Bridge program in the spring of 2008. He resides in Durham, N.C. with his wife Rhonda Collins, also of Robeson County, and their dog Sonny.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Get your education, because once you do, that’s something that can’t be taken away from you. You’ll be able to get a good job and have a good life.” These are the words I heard growing up in my Lumbee home, town and community. It was and still is a sentiment shared by my family and my community. Education is of great value to American Indian people, especially the Lumbee because it is often viewed as “the great equalizer” (Dial & Eliades, 1996). One can find American Indians today in positions of prominence in various areas such as law, medicine, engineering and education, and for many, it started with the push by family members and often the entire community to earn a degree. Education is touted as a means to move up in society and also to help your own people because you are urged to reach back and take others with you.

American Indians have made significant educational gains in recent years with enrollments in colleges and universities more than doubling over the last 30 years (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). Yet when compared to their counterparts, they pale in comparison in terms of enrollment and graduation in post-secondary education (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). In 2008, American Indian students accounted for one percent of the total population of students enrolled in undergraduate and post baccalaureate programs compared to 63 percent for White students, 14 percent for Black, 12 percent for Hispanic and 7 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). Actual graduation rates and figures are harder to ascertain. For example, American Indian students are often left out of national reports and data due to their low numbers (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013); yet it is widely known they graduate at significantly low rates (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill,

2008; Pavel, 1992). In 2005, American Indians were awarded 0.7% of the bachelor's degrees conferred (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). As of 2012, only 39 percent of American Indians who began their degrees in 2005 as full-time students at 4-year universities had completed their studies, compared to 60 percent for White students (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2012). This presents a cause for concern for our society. We must learn more to better understand the experiences of American Indian postsecondary students to further explain their low enrollment and graduation rates. Additionally, while we improve our understanding of low enrollments and graduation rates, we must continue to explore what needs to be done to ensure American Indian students' continued enrollment and progress to degree completion. A growing body of research about American Indian students and their participation in colleges and universities has informed this picture, yet so much more needs to be understood (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012; Fox, Lowe & McClellan, 2005).

Continued research must seek to understand the myriad experiences of American Indian students and the salient and diverging themes which emerge as examples of cultural success, practices, knowledge and well-being from first-hand accounts. This study frames the dynamics and issues that evolve from American Indian students' stories of the university experience utilizing transculturation theory. Storytelling is at the heart of Native cultures and is the method by which much of Native history is passed on within families and communities. These individual stories require an understanding of the relationship of federal Indian Education policy in trying to assimilate Native populations into an educational experience designed by White culture. Researchers must take into account the complex

history of American Indian education in this country which is steeped in a culture of assimilation, racism and degradation (Adams, 1995; Garrod & Larrimore, 1997). A plethora of stories exist regarding the harsh beginnings of American Indian education and the attempt to make the Indian feel equal, yet at the same time, their success was dependent upon the White settlers who were supposedly saving them from themselves (Ide, 2003). In fact, the premise of educating American Indians was never to educate them in culturally relevant and meaningful ways, but rather to eradicate every part of the Indian identity and save the man within (Adams, 1995; Churchill, 2004). As a result, education has been identified as a complex, multi-faceted conundrum for American Indians.

Surprisingly, Native peoples have risen to various levels of prominence and reaped some rewards of what is still often viewed as a broken educational system for American Indians. Within the higher education system, there are those students who have prevailed and achieved success, yet academic literature rarely seeks to highlight the success story (Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005). Some of this achievement has been attributed to the start of Tribal Colleges and Universities where tribal nations and communities have taken charge of their own education in ways that are culturally relevant. Additionally, there are students who also persist within predominantly White institutions (PWI). Understanding these students' experiences is necessary as they encounter far greater challenges in this environment than students at tribal colleges by being the most underrepresented minority on PWI campuses. By giving voice to these students and listening to their stories, educational researchers can inform future practices regarding enhancing the college experience and success of American Indian students.

Situating these stories within the context of theory helps explain and contribute to our understanding the experiences of American Indian students. Many of the existing student-related theories and models used to study college students may not be relevant for American Indians. For this reason, the current study draws upon transculturation theory (Huffman, 2001) to help explicate the story of the American Indian student experience within higher education, rooted within rather than apart from their cultural identities. Transculturation theory also takes into account Native student experiences at PWIs (Huffman, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Transculturation theory is appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, it is culturally-appropriate and specific to American Indian students and their experiences in mainstream education (Huffman, 2010). This is important because this theory was not subsequently applied to American Indians after having first been used to understand other majority or minority groups. The opposite is true in that it evolved as an attempt to understand how American Indian students experience education in majority culture. As such, transculturation theory is based on the premise that American Indians do not have to relinquish their Indian identity in those institutions where they find themselves in the minority. In fact, according to this theory, it is their Indianness which serves as their anchor and a source of strength to encourage them to push through times of cultural conflict and feelings of incongruence between themselves and the university (Huffman, 2010).

Second, if properly applied, transculturation theory has the ability to explain and help practitioners understand the complexities of the American Indian student experience in

education. Consider university orientation programs. Comparatively, when viewing university orientation and transition programs, the focus is on establishing student independence. Student success is rooted in students establishing their own norms and their own physical well-being and then integrating into the existing community life. Additionally, emphasis in these orientations is on establishing new relationships and friendships along with becoming academically successful. American Indian students often come from communities where their existence is based upon strong interpersonal relations with others and autonomy is established within the extended family, not independent of it. As such, American Indian students can experience cultural incongruence upon entry to the university at a level that may not be experienced by those from majority cultures. Transculturation theory can serve to explain how American Indian students successfully navigate this transition as well as other transitions within the university environment.

Third, transculturation theory operates from a standpoint of student success rather than failure. This theory treats students' cultural identities as a source of strength leading to that success. Huffman (2001) identifies four stages of transculturation: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment and participation. Stage one, or initial alienation, refers to the time when students begin their college journey and encounter isolation and the inability to relate to the greater community. Relying on their cultural background and heritage as a source of strength moves them into stage two of self-discovery. Realignment involves navigating between both the Native culture of the student, as well as the greater community of the university. American Indian students, as members of a minority culture, draws on their Indigenous knowledge to stay grounded and focused. Lastly, as the student moves into

the participatory phase, he or she fully utilizes cultural heritage as a source of strength while integrating into the college environment.

In sum, transculturation theory provides a framework for engaging American Indian students in dialogue regarding their experience with higher education. Most importantly, it allows students to be able to express their thoughts and beliefs about how they experience college life. The American Indian student who shares his or her story can inform university policy and procedure. By understanding more about culturally-relevant practices through the narratives of American Indian students, institutions can be culturally responsive and supportive of the American Indian student experience.

Problem

While research in the area of American Indian student academic achievement has grown over the years, there are still many unknowns (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012; Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005; Huffman, 2010). Larrimore and McClellan (2005) suggest we add to “the existing, albeit sparse, body of qualitative work on the experiences of Native American students in postsecondary education.” (p. 27). One of the most prevalent issues is the lack of research about American Indian students in general and southeastern tribes specifically. The Lumbee are the largest tribe east of the Mississippi and the largest tribe within the state of North Carolina; however, their stories do not pervade the literature regarding the American Indian higher education experience (Lowery, 2010). The large presence of the Lumbee combined with the abundance of colleges and universities within the state of North Carolina warrants learning more about the college experience of the Lumbee, by and through the Lumbee, using the stories of Lumbee Indian students within

predominantly White universities. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) note, “In reality, Native Americans are the experts at being Native American, and thus it is imperative that their voices be heard when creating policy that can directly or indirectly affect their educational lives” (p. 63). This research provides an avenue for former students to share these stories and inform the phenomenon of American Indian students’ experiences in higher education.

Purpose

This study accomplishes several goals. First, it offers empirical information through the narratives of recent college graduates about the educational experiences of a group of nontraditional students, specifically the Lumbee, whose background is markedly different than the majority population in the predominantly White postsecondary institutions where they studied. Next, it specifically applies a theoretical framework that is culturally relevant and appropriate while offering a structure through which to examine the process of transculturation. Finally, it serves to inform the practices of universities to enhance support for American Indian students.

Giving voice to the experience of Lumbee Indian students at a predominantly White institution (PWI) illuminates the complex nature of American Indian student integration into university culture. While strides have been made to learn more about the complexities of Lumbee culture, including educational experiences, more needs to be known and understood. Over twenty years ago, Tierney (1992) noted that much of the research regarding American Indian students was void of the student voice and lacked cultural context that would help others better understand the dynamics of the student experience; this lack still applies today. Research that continues to repeat this cycle essentially leaves the student out of the process;

as a result, “Their voices are silenced and their dreams, if not denied, are at least unacknowledged” (p. 85). The current study provides a rich, detailed discussion of several American Indian students’ experiences in the university.

Definitions and Terms

Indigenous: Refers to a group of people associated with a particular place/region before any influence of outside peoples. This sometimes refers to people considered original peoples and is used to convey cohesiveness among Native people around the world (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012).

American Indian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment (U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 2010).

Native American/Native: Used interchangeably with American Indian and a term that I will use throughout this dissertation.

Federally Recognized Indian Tribe: An American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity which has a government-to-government relationship with the United States and as such is entitled to the rights and privileges of this association to include federal government assistance through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (U.S. Department of the Interior: Indian Affairs, 2013, retrieved from <http://www.bia.gov/FAQs/>).

State Recognized Indian Tribe: An American Indian tribe recognized by individual states but not the federal government. Tribes designated as state recognized do not have a relationship to the federal government (U. S. Department of the Interior: Indian Affairs, 2013, retrieved from <http://www.bia.gov/FAQs/>).

Transculturation Theory: A developing theory which seeks to understand the experiences of American Indian students in mainstream institutions. Transculturation theory seeks to explain how American Indian students with strong cultural connections come to achieve success within the university utilizing their culture as a source of support and strength (Huffman, 2010).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI): Describes colleges or universities where the total White student enrollment is 50% or more (Lomotey, 2010).

Research Question

This research was guided by the following question: How can transculturation theory help us to understand and explain the experiences of Lumbee Indian students' successful college completion at a predominantly white higher education institution?

Significance of This Study

This research is significant for many reasons. First, it provides knowledge regarding a phenomenon that is not well-known and is rarely understood. This knowledge was authored by the students' voices as recent graduates who shared the richness of their experiences within the university. As graduates shared their experiences, I was able to learn firsthand what was of value to these students, what their integral sources of support were, and what barriers they faced as college students who pursued their education at PWIs.

Secondly, educational and administrative practices within the university are informed by the findings of this study. Past research (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005) has highlighted the need to add culturally-relevant approaches to institutional practices such as including family in the recruitment and

admissions processes, which has meaning and significance to American Indian students. This research contributes to that literature. Because we do not know enough about the pathways to success for American Indian students, our practices within the academy often lack cultural relevance which would help to ensure a more positive college-going experience for all student populations. This is integral to American Indian students' being empowered to reclaim their place in an educational system that has not always served them well. Having advocates who serve in faculty and staff positions who understand American Indian students has the potential to help Native students have more positive experiences with their postsecondary education and advance to degree completion.

Third, these stories also serve to positively impact future generations of American Indian students. One of the most effective means for promoting Native student success is to let Native students see and hear the stories of other Natives who navigated the college environment to degree completion (Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). This tradition of storytelling serves to pass down knowledge to other students who will enter the university. This research also serves as a means of knowledge preservation for the American Indian community.

Fourth, this study will add to the tribal diversity found in the literature about minority populations' college experiences. There are very few studies of American Indian students in higher education that focus on particular tribes (Larrimore & McClellan, 2005). This is important as there are vast differences among tribes (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno & Solyom, 2012; Fox et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2010); an understanding of these differences in relation to educational experiences is important for appropriate planning and support. If one were to have a discussion about the experiences of American Indian students from an urban area

versus a reservation, although they may share some rich data, these experiences would be very different (Fox et al., 2005). Even among the Lumbee, one will find varying stories of experience due to the rural or tribal area versus that of the student who grew up in a larger town or city that does not have strong ties to the tribal community (Lowery, 2010; Oakley, 2005).

Fifth, faculty and staff will benefit from the insight gained through these stories. In colleges and universities across the U.S., the number of American Indian faculty and staff is dismal compared to other groups. In 2009, American Indians comprised only one percent of college and university faculty, compared to seven percent for Black, six percent for Asian/Pacific Islander, four percent for Hispanic and 79 percent for White (Freeman & Fox, 2005). As a result, many practitioners and faculty involved with Native students have little knowledge about culturally-appropriate methods of working with American Indian students. The current study serves as an educational tool which practitioners, faculty and staff of universities can use to inform their work with Native students.

Lastly, this study contributes to a theory, transculturation theory (Huffman, 2001), which is relatively new in the field. Huffman (2001), the originator of this theory, conducted his study with a participant pool of predominantly Lakota students while the present research focus will involve Lumbee students in higher education. The majority of Lumbee people reside in the southeast United States. As a result, they have a different cultural experience compared to Native peoples of other areas of the country. Analyzing the stories of academically successful students at a predominantly White university in the southeast will further advance this theory by applying it to a population with whom it has not been utilized.

Overview of Research Methodology

This study informs the larger literature on the experiences of American Indians, specifically the Lumbee, in higher education by employing the use of narrative case study to understand how American Indian students experience higher education. Stories of recent graduates from the academy serve as the primary data source for understanding this phenomenon. Utilizing in-person interviews, the research was designed to elicit stories of what it is like to be an American Indian student from a predominantly American Indian community attending a predominantly White university. Transculturation theory serves as the theoretical lens through which their experiences are viewed. This theory, explained further in subsequent chapters, focuses on American Indian students who persist to degree completion using their cultural identity as a source of strength and inspiration rather than something to be suppressed or denied.

Summary

University campuses are arguably more diverse than perhaps ever before, and it behooves campus administrators, faculty, staff and students to become more knowledgeable about the students which comprise their diverse student bodies. The problem this research addresses is the reality that American Indian students have been a part of higher education for some time, yet little is known and understood about their experiences. This research addresses this problem directly by soliciting feedback from American Indian students who have recently graduated from a predominantly white university. This research also adds to the field's understanding of all constituents in higher education, thereby increasing awareness regarding the unique attributes of the American Indian students' postsecondary experience.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the literature related to American Indian students in higher education, noting what we have come to know about this experience. Additionally, I discuss some aspects of American Indian culture in general and the Lumbee specifically in order to frame this study. This is necessary due to the complex nature of American Indian culture and to help the reader understand that all American Indian experiences are not the same; Lumbees are likely to share similarities and distinct differences compared to tribes from another area or region. Transculturation theory will also be explained further.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Little is known and understood about American Indian students in higher education (Fox et al., 2005; Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013). This is rather striking when considering the long history of American Indians in this country. At the same time, it is understandable when thinking about how the beginnings of formal education were rooted and steeped in discrimination and oppression (Adams, 1995; Reyhner & Eder, 2004). As a result of this dreadful beginning, the voices of American Indian students were stymied and the participation rates of American Indians in higher education suffered. However, as the landscape of colleges and universities has changed through the years, so has the presence of American Indian students. Today, there are more American Indian students in higher education than before (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008), yet their educational experiences as described in their own voices have yet to be heard. It is imperative that postsecondary educators understand how American Indian students approach and experience education to achieve a better understanding of the complex nature of American Indian student success.

Overview

Because of the minimal research regarding the experiences of American Indians in higher education, continued investigation is necessary to understand the needs of these students. This understanding begins with a review of how the voice of American Indian students has been expressed, and in some cases, repressed throughout history. This chapter provides an overview of the beginnings of education for American Indian students followed by some general knowledge of American Indian cultures. It should be noted that within American Indian culture there is a vast array of traditions, value systems, beliefs, and sub-

cultures that is complex. As such, this research acknowledges this complicated mix and does not aim to establish that there is one American Indian culture or way of knowing; rather, this study focuses on the experiences of Lumbee Indians. Additionally, I highlight what we know about American Indians specifically in the university system. Lastly, I provide an overview of Lumbee culture and transculturation theory as a tool critical to our understanding.

A Brief History: American Indians and Education

An adequate understanding of American Indians and higher education requires some reflection on the unique beginnings of education for this population. American Indians embrace education in a manner today that is very different from the 1800s when the goal of education was to strip away the identity of the student as Indian and make him or her American and Christian (Adams, 1995). The initial intent of education was to teach the basics of reading and writing, history and arithmetic, with the ultimate goal of making the Indian more “civilized” through assimilation. This would be achieved by stripping students of the community and family orientation to which they were accustomed: “All in all, the Indian child was to be totally transformed and all vestiges of the former self eradicated” (Adams, p. 24). Underlying this aim was the disruption of the community model American Indians were used to and understood.

Once the focus of education was determined, the formal process for accomplishing this pernicious plan had to be established. The process in the mid-to-late 1800s would be achieved through three types of institutions which included reservation day schools, on-reservation boarding schools and off-reservation boarding schools (Adams, 1995). The reservation day schools and reservation boarding schools did not last long due to the strength

and influence of the American Indian community in close proximity; they proved too influential and thus circumvented the attempts of those in power to eradicate and force assimilation. As a result, the day school and reservation boarding school model did not last long. The off-reservation boarding school experience marked a significant turn to formalized education for American Indians.

The Carlisle Indian School, established in 1879 in Pennsylvania, is noted as the first off-reservation boarding experience for American Indians (Adams, 1995). Established by Colonel Richard Henry Pratt, it was often touted as an exemplary model of Indian assimilation and eradication and as such ushered in a groundswell of similar type schools across the country. Part of this success was attributed to more American Indian students becoming cognizant of the White way and their slow dependence upon the White man to provide for them. The long distance of the boarding schools from the communities of the American Indian students supported the efforts to colonize the Indian. To the American Indian, the effects were deleterious at best. With their identities stripped and their religious practices becoming more Christianized, the Carlisle school lived on until the 1920s. During this time many of the practices and procedures of off-reservation schools like Carlisle faced growing scrutiny by Natives and non-Natives (Adams). Over time, these institutions were either closed or their practices were changed to encourage a more harmonious relationship with American Indians while still pushing to assimilate American Indian students.

Today, American Indians have slowly become authors of their own fate in regards to their education, yet some would argue they do not fully enjoy their independence and sovereignty as Indian people (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001). There are government and

private organizations such as the Bureau of Indian Education, the National Indian Education Association, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium which serve as vehicles for change in American Indian education policy. Some tribal communities have their own tribal schools and colleges where the curriculum has a strong indigenous influence.

However, in spite of this support, we still have much to learn about the experience of American Indians in education. The landscape of many United States colleges is more diverse than in the past, yet according to a recent *Chronicle* report, in 2006 American Indians represented only one percent of the more than 17 million students in higher education (U.S. Department of Education, as cited in the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*).

Understanding the history of American Indian education in the United States helps shape our understanding of what is happening to American Indian college students. This historical perspective provides a way to understand on some level the resistance of American Indian peoples to fully embrace education because it is a system that once suppressed and hindered their progress. While it is recognized as a means to succeed in today's world, we must consider this history and use it to inform and develop our practices in the academy. To accomplish this goal, we must also understand more about the complexities of American Indian Culture.

American Indian Cultures

Strong identity and cultural associations shape and frame the worldview of Native peoples. The beginning of American Indian person's identity rests with the family. This also includes extended family as well as kinship and clan affiliations (Horse, 2001). Beyond this, identity then extends to the tribal group and the general Indian population. The concept of

family is stressed throughout the cycle of birth to death of Native peoples. As such, family is highly regarded; this has been noted as one of the predominant reasons American Indian students struggle in mainstream academia. This transition from home to university usually includes some degree of severing family ties, which can be difficult and challenging (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Cibik & Chambers, 1991; Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Martin, 2005; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995; Rindone, 1988). Sue and Sue (1999) have noted that even at college age, American Indian students work very hard to maintain family ties. This is the antithesis of Western culture which emphasizes the creation of independence by young adults' moving away from family to develop an individualized sense of identity.

Because of the strong connections within the American Indian family, a sense of community and collaboration among American Indian peoples is developed. This often stands in stark contrast to the competitive nature and environment of the college and university. Amid the university's push for a student to be academically successful is the encouraging the student's desire for independence and competitiveness (Garrod & Larrimore, 1997). This may be particularly difficult for the American Indian student who has been taught that we are all connected and we conduct our lives in unison and harmony. Garrod and Larrimore note, "One's physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects are seamlessly interwoven, and one can maintain health and well-being only by achieving balance among all of them" (pp. 4-5). For the Native student, attending to one area and not the others creates imbalance.

Adding to the complex nature of American Indian culture are the vast differences that lie between tribes, communities, and regions. Horse (2001) notes, “Those who are searching for a single racial identity model would assume coherent and commonly held ideas of race and ethnicity among American Indians. Such may not be the case given the wide diversity among Indian peoples” (p. 91). This is also an important consideration among the Lumbee people whose predominant location is in the southeast portion of the United States. The Lumbee have a complex identity, yet their sense of self as identified through their community and family is strong (Lowery, 2010). The study of tribes located within the southeast, like the Lumbee, is a burgeoning area of research and catching up to studies of other tribes such as those of the southwest (Oakley, 2005).

What We Do Know

Despite the dearth of research about the American Indian experience in higher education, there are some things we have come to know. It is established that family is an aspect of American Indian culture which is valued, and we see the influence of family within higher education for American Indian students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). There are other areas such as student preparedness and faculty-staff interactions which impact the university experience as well (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Additionally, issues related to cultural incongruence are cited in the literature as potential barriers to postsecondary success (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Baysden, 2000). These areas are discussed to provide insight into the complex issues which impact the experience of American Indian students within the university.

Family

Some of the earliest research indicates family as one of the most influential components of American Indian student life (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Cibik & Chambers, 1991; Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Martin, 2005; Reyhner, & Dodd, 1995; Rindone, 1988). The idea of taking care of the family and the family as a unit is taught as an integral part of Native culture from childhood. Sue and Sue (1999) note most American Indians work to maintain their relationship with family, even at college age, compared to the majority of Western culture which seeks to create independence from family. For American Indians, family support serves as a source of strength for students as they pursue a degree (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Martin, 2005; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Baysden, 2000). Brown and Kurpius (1997) found that family was as integral a part of staying in college and persisting as it was for leaving and returning home. While some students use their family as a source of motivation, it can serve as a deterrent when the pull of family needs draws one away from the university.

More recent studies continue to indicate the importance of family to the success of American Indian students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Baysden, 2000; Thomason & Thurber, 1999). Guillory and Wolverton found family to be an integral part of the student experience in the university. This study revealed family was most frequently cited as a factor impacting persistence. Family was defined in varying ways, including “parents, siblings back home, single parents raising several children, and extended family all constituted family” (p. 74).

Understanding more about the role of family helps inform the research regarding how American Indians approach education as an experience to be shared with family. Education is viewed as a group effort and it is achieved in concert with family and community support (Waterman, 2007), not separate from it. These studies have solidified a central tenet of the experience of American Indian students in higher education which is the value and influence of family on this process. This stands in contrast to many mainstream institutions which encourage separateness and developing individual identity. The family is often part of the identity of the American Indian student and is thus a part of the college-going experience.

Missing from this important literature are stories regarding the influence of family among American Indian students in the southeast. Much of the extant literature focuses on American Indians who reside in other regions of the United States. Given the diversity of American Indian peoples, more needs to be understood about the impact of family on students from different tribes across the country.

Student Preparedness

In addition to the role of family, student preparedness is another aspect to be considered as influencing American Indians' experiences with higher education. Student preparedness, or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), is the belief in oneself to succeed rather than actual academic preparedness. Gloria and Kurpius (2001) investigated this concept using the constructs of self-belief, social support and comfort in the university. All three constructs accounted for non-persistence decisions. Those students who had higher self-esteem and a belief that they could succeed in the college or university were less apt to leave college before completing their degrees. In another study, Rindone (1988) examined the role of self-

efficacy in the decisions of Navajo students to complete their degree. Interviews were conducted with over 100 students who had completed at least a bachelor's degree. Findings suggested those students who believed in their ability to succeed tended to stay motivated to finish their degree.

These findings suggest that collaboration and communication are important to creating a sense of cohesiveness and building trust, as well as fostering in students an attitude of belief in their personal capacity to succeed. These studies also speak to the importance of relationships of American Indian students with family, students, professors and other university administrators. Developing this attitude and belief in their own ability to succeed is strengthened when those whom American Indian students encounter and work alongside in the university help promote and encourage success. However, continued research must provide a more informed picture of how self-efficacy promotes degree completion and student success and to what extent it is supported by others in the campus community.

Faculty and Staff Interaction

Research suggests (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004) that faculty and staff interactions with American Indian students may help foster a more positive academic experience. Faculty and staff involvement and interactions with Native students are integral to their university experience. While their focus was not American Indian students specifically, studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) have noted the importance of faculty/staff interactions with minority students, especially those whose family members did not have formal educations or at best degree attainment was minimal.

Relationships of trust between American Indian students and their faculty promote students'

positive adjustment to campus life and, in turn, allow for increased persistence (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004).

The lack of American Indian faculty and staff on many campuses requires, according to Tierney (1991), a special effort on the part of non-Native faculty and staff to learn about and get involved with the lives of American Indian students. These studies have been integral for establishing the importance of faculty and staff interactions in creating an environment that is welcoming for American Indian students. This collaborative nature is more in line with what they are accustomed to and creates a university culture that is familiar to them. The value of replicating this type of environment is integral and discussed next.

Cultural Incongruence within the University

Because of their unique culture, American Indians often experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, lack of respect and being misunderstood (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Baysden, 2000; Taylor, 1999). In traditional college environments, students are often encouraged to become more individualized in their patterns of thinking and in pursuit of their goals, “often separating social, emotional, or spiritual well-being,” (Montgomery et al., 2000, p. 388); traditional in the Indian way of meaning “is considered to mean multiple interconnections of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual identity that combine to define expectations for the Indian way” (p. 388). Colleges and universities would do well to make the practices within the university inviting and welcoming for American Indian students as well as planning support systems that are informed by American Indian customs and values. For example, by assuaging feelings of “homesickness” and helping students develop “a positive self-concept” upon

entry through orientation programs, American Indian students are encouraged and motivated to achieve success (Pavel & Padilla, 1993). This is an area where tribal colleges have succeeded (Martin, 2005), specifically by increasing the retention of American Indian students to degree completion by incorporating culturally-relevant programming. The researchers suggest mainstream colleges and universities can learn from these practices.

While family, student preparedness, faculty-staff interactions and cultural incongruence inform the American Indian student experience in the university, more needs to be understood. Additional research must include specific tribes as little is known about how particular tribes experience education (Fox et al., 2005). As such, the current study focuses on the experience of the Lumbee in higher education.

The Lumbee

The Lumbee are a tribe of approximately 45,000 members who reside in southeastern North Carolina, primarily in Robeson and Hoke counties (Bryant & LaFromboise, 2005). They have a complex history that is rich and vibrant in addition to a culture that is strong and very much alive today. While their origins and history have been a source of much talk and controversy, the Lumbee have a strong identity and know who they are as a tribe and as a people. Today, Lumbees can be found all over the country, but the majority reside in or near the town of Pembroke, North Carolina. Pembroke is the epitome of small town life where everybody knows everybody; in many ways, the community remains untouched by the various forces of society outside of this small community. Most of the leadership positions within the town are held by Lumbees, and many of the school systems within the Pembroke area are comprised predominantly of American Indian students.

Education and the Lumbee

The Lumbee have an interesting educational history. In 1875 after Reconstruction, the state of North Carolina began to work in earnest to provide education to its residents, regardless of race. These schools were segregated at the time, and while Whites and Blacks could attend schools, there were no separate schools created for American Indians until 1885 (Dial & Eliades, 1996). After aligning with Hamilton McMillan, a powerful ally in the neighboring community of Red Springs, legislation was established to allow the Lumbee to begin their own schools (Dial & Eliades). While this was a marked step toward ameliorating the conditions that existed for the Lumbee of Robeson County, the Lumbees were confronted with the issue of a lack of individuals qualified to educate their people. The reality was that no formal education had been provided to the Indian citizens of this area between 1835 and 1875 because there were no schools open to them. As a result, illiteracy rates were very high and had to be combated in order to establish a system of education (Dial & Eliades, 1996). After many struggles, the Croatan Indian Normal School was established in 1887 with 15 students. The school has undergone various name changes throughout the years and today stands proudly as the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNC Pembroke, 2013).

Today, UNC Pembroke is a symbol of pride for the Lumbee and the surrounding communities. UNCP has played an integral role in the education of the Lumbee. As a result, there are many physicians, lawyers, educators, politicians, business persons and more who credit UNCP for their foundation. Important to note is during the time period of 1939 to 1953, UNCP was the only state-supported four-year college in the country for American Indian students (Dial & Eliades, 1996). UNCP is also a testament to the strength of the

Lumbee as a people, their connectedness as a community, and their faith in God and each other. These are all important values within the Lumbee community which need to be understood to some degree to provide a complete picture of the background of the Lumbee students within the university system as a whole (Dial & Eliades).

Faith and the Lumbee

Outside the norm of traditional religion and practices normally associated with many American Indian tribes, the Lumbee community has a long tradition of Christianity. In Robeson County and in the town of Pembroke, a church can be found on almost on every corner. There is a proliferation of churches with a predominance of Baptist and Methodist representation in the town and the county. While it took time to establish churches in the community, religious or Christian practices are well-established, suggesting the degree to which White settlers have impacted the community through colonization. In this sense, the Lumbee have often been viewed as more assimilated and acculturated. In fact, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, some Lumbees worshipped from time-to-time in White churches (Dial & Eliades, 1996).

Today, the impact of faith and religion is very evident among the Lumbee. It is through the church that the Lumbee people express a significant component of their culture (Maynor, 2010). Arguably, the church has also served as a source of strength and resilience among the Lumbee because of its outreach to the community and service to others. Many Lumbee still experience overwhelming levels of poverty and oppression, and it is through the church they sometimes find relief and respite from these external forces.

Family and the Lumbee

Family to the Lumbee extends beyond just blood relatives. For instance, just recently I attended an annual powwow and could often hear references to being “among my people” or “hanging with my people” to refer to the group of American Indian peoples as a collective, regardless of community-specific family or bloodlines. In years past, there were many activities that brought the family together and some still do today. For instance, within the Lumbee community, when it was time for a hog killing, barn raising, or other community activity, the expectation was that the entire community would participate (Dial & Eliades, 1996). Heavily impacted by years of White influence and assimilation, some Lumbee customs such as these practices are vastly different from those associated with the ways of life found among American Indians of the plains or south and northwest regions of the country. It was the Lumbee way of life to support each other and help with the “raising” of each other’s children and families. This speaks to the community aspect and collaborative nature of Native peoples and has implications for practitioners within the university.

Faith, family and education are all inextricable parts of the whole that is the Lumbee. Arguably there are others, but as the researcher of this study I proffer that these areas broadly encompass the essence of Lumbee life in southeastern North Carolina. The Lumbee have a rich and diverse story, and this research will serve to share a small yet integral part of that story while expanding the research in the area of American Indian student experience in higher education. This expansion includes the application of a theoretical framework, transculturation theory, which provides the necessary lens through

which to view and ultimately understand the experiences of Lumbee Indian students in higher education.

Transculturation Theory

Transculturation theory is a new and emerging theory that is gaining prominence in studies of American Indians and their educational experiences (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). Developed specifically to assess American Indian achievement in mainstream education, this theory asserts the academic success of American Indian students is bolstered when they draw on their culture as a motivator rather than an inhibitor to the college experience. Notably, this theory was not developed to explain the experiences of other minority populations and then applied to American Indians. Transculturation was derived from a specific need to understand the American Indian experience in education. Developed by Huffman (1999, 2001, 2010), transculturation holds promise to help those in postsecondary education understand how American Indian students with strong cultural connections come to be socialized in the university milieu where the majority society has dominant presence and influence.

Transculturation theory represents a departure from past research regarding the American Indian educational experience (Huffman, 2010). The history of American Indian education in this country has been rooted in assimilation. These ideals of assimilation were used to assert that the only way the American Indian could be successful was to take on the belief systems of majority culture imposed by colonists. This would require the entire removal of any semblances of Native culture. In fact, much of the literature surrounding American Indian education from the early 1860s until the late 1980s and 1990s offered

assimilation and acculturation as practices that would elevate the Indian, yet they failed to document at what cost (Huffman, 2010; Miller, 1971).

Rooted in tenets of sociology and psychology, transculturation asserts the celebration of ethnic identity to enhance personal self-identity. Through this process, an individual can gain a great sense of belonging and become a productive member of the larger society.

Huffman (2010) defines transculturation as the “process by which an individual can center and interact in the milieu of another culture without loss of the person’s native cultural identity and ways” (p. 170). American Indian students come to be transcultured through a process which occurs over four stages: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment and participation. Stage one, or initial alienation, refers to the time when students begin their college journey and encounter isolation as well as the inability to relate to the greater community. By relying on one’s cultural background and heritage as a source of strength, the individual next moves one into stage two, self-discovery. Realignment involves navigating between both the Native culture of the student and the greater community of the university. The American Indian student, as part of a minority culture, draws on his/her Indigenous knowledge to stay grounded and focused. Lastly, as the student moves into the participatory phase, he or she fully utilizes his or her heritage as a source of strength while integrating into the college environment.

Transculturation theory does face some criticisms which are acknowledged by Huffman (2010). First, some critics argue that this theory does not account for the limited possibilities some students have to engage the cultural setting of the university. As an example, some American Indian students may have other constraints on their time which

limit their involvement and opportunity for interaction such as family obligations and having to work to provide additional financial support. Additionally, some American Indian students who attend mainstream colleges and universities may experience higher levels of racism due to a lack of appreciation for their distinct culture (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). As a result, they do not engage the college environment and may withdraw from the university altogether.

Second, it has been argued that transculturation does not explain why those students who have a strong cultural connection and know who they are do not come to be transcultured (Pidgeon, 2008). Some American Indian students view their identity as something so sacred and special that it needs to be protected. This protection results in American Indian students resisting the need to fully embrace the university culture. For some students, this may seem like a huge sacrifice which sometimes impedes their progress to degree attainment. The reality is that many of them will decide it is too much to offer in exchange for a college degree (Huffman, 2008) which results in higher levels of dropout.

Third, there are some critics who challenge transculturation theory because of an implied belief that the responsibility for this cultural transformation resides solely with the American Indian student (Huffman, 2010). It is argued that there is not enough onus on the university to undergo its own organizational cultural change in order to meet American Indian students where they are, or at least to meet them halfway. This transformation done in concert would be more in line with American Indian tradition. Pursuing the pathway to cultural understanding in partnership rather than imposing this responsibility on one party is preferred among American Indians.

Still, transculturation theory holds promise for assisting practitioners in understanding the complexities surrounding the American Indian students' experiences in higher education, although it's not without criticism (Huffman, 2008, 2010; Larrimore & McClellan, 2005; Pidgeon, 2008). It has been utilized in higher education settings and offers strong evidence of how some American Indian students come to be socialized in a majority culture while maintaining their own sense of who they are as Indian people (Huffman, 1999; Huffman & Ferguson, 2007; Larrimore & McClellan).

Summary

Understanding the experience of American Indian students in higher education is complex. The limited amount of research conducted in this area has simultaneously informed and complicated the phenomenon because so much more needs to be known. The American Indian worldview is strongly connected to values and principles which include respect for family and community as well as cohesion and unity. Research has shown these principles significantly impact the college experiences of American Indian students, yet much more is needed to expand this knowledge base.

One of the ways this can be achieved is by utilizing the narratives of American Indian students to explicate their process of attaining a college degree. In particular, it is important to understand how some American Indian students with strong connections to their communities and a strong sense of identity advance to degree attainment in majority-serving universities and colleges. Additionally, it is important to a theory with an indigenous component as the lens through which to view and understand these complex processes. As such, this research applies the theoretical lens of transculturation to the college experience of

Lumbee Indian students in higher education at a predominantly White university. This research also attends to the broader need for educational research to highlight the stories of specific tribes to inform the literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study provides empirical information about the educational experiences and perspectives of a group of Lumbee students who recently navigated a predominantly White higher education institution to degree completion. Specifically, this research addresses the following question: How can transculturation theory help us to understand and explain the experiences of Lumbee Indian students' successful college completion at a predominantly white higher education institution? This study applies a theoretical framework that is culturally-relevant and offers a structure through which to examine the process of transculturation.

Overview

In Chapter 3, I provide the roadmap used to address the problem and research question for this study. I outline the rationale for qualitative research and discuss my role as the researcher in relation to my own positionality and subjectivity. Next, I provide the theoretical framework and rationale for narrative case study. Issues of rigor, including anonymity and confidentiality, trustworthiness, validity and reliability, limitations and ethics are discussed next. The process of data collection is explained and includes site selection, interview protocol, participant selection, document analysis, and artifacts. Finally, I provide the rationale and process of data analysis.

The Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is concerned with the social interactions of individuals and how they make meaning from and interpret their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For this particular study, the qualitative approach was suitable because of the complex nature of

experiences situated within a particular American Indian culture. At the heart of qualitative research is the premise that an understanding of the deep, rich, lived experiences of individuals can only be understood if done so within the natural environment where the experiences occur rather than through traditional positivist research methods (Marshall & Rossman).

There are many differences within American Indian culture, and as a result, American Indian students bring a vast array of experiences to the college campus. Even within particular tribes such as the Lumbee, many differences in how students experience college life and interpret or assign meanings to those experiences exist. It can be argued that because these experiences are so different, we can never really know for sure what is valid and what is not. For the qualitative researcher, these are the things which draw him or her into a project to investigate a certain phenomenon because there are so many unknowns. Research of this nature is “often confusing, messy, intensely frustrating and fundamentally nonlinear,” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 23). Qualitative research is designed to deal with this ambiguity, and various tools are designed to help present a clear picture of the lived reality of individuals.

Operating from a social constructionist point of view (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), it is my belief that individuals are active participants in creating their perceived reality; thus, interpretations of university culture will differ from student to student. I view the student as an active participant in creating and interpreting their experiences on the college campus. The stories of each participant are of value because each one holds a piece of the complex puzzle of the American Indian student experience. What is

important for one student may not be important for another, yet each part is integral. This approach to meaning-making considers the stories of all research participants as valid. As the researcher, I extend this knowledge base by integrating the research participants' experience with my personal knowledge which is the amalgamation of life experience, the literature and data regarding American Indians in higher education. In turn, the readers of this dissertation are able to extend their knowledge base through the empirical evidence of this research process.

Research is also about building blocks in that knowledge gained is part of a foundation for future research. It takes many building blocks to inform the full picture of a phenomenon. This small part of learning more about American Indian college experiences will serve as a building block on which future research can be conducted. Qualitative methods specifically provide a way for research participants to share their stories as sources of empirical information. A significant feature of American Indian cultures, including Lumbee culture, is storytelling. It is our stories that define who we are and help establish our sense of identity and place (Brayboy, 2005; Lowery, 2010). Cajete (2005) notes that a commonly-held belief among Native peoples is “they must preserve their stories, languages, customs, songs, dances, and ways of thinking and learning because they sustain the life of the individual, family and community” (p. 76). As such, the stories shared in this research study serve many purposes with a focus on elucidating the experience of American Indian students on a college campus.

In many ways, the stories that have shaped who I am have taken on new meaning as I pursue my own education seeking an advanced degree. The struggles of my people to have a

voice and find their place in the world have a new relevance as I seek to strengthen our collective voice through this research. Because our stories are so inextricably linked to who we are, it is impossible to leave them aside for this research. It is important to continue telling our stories through the voices of current Lumbee students in higher education because it ultimately improves the way for current students and those who will follow. The qualitative approach affords American Indian students the opportunity to tell their stories, in their words. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) note, “In reality, Native Americans are the experts at being Native American, and thus it is imperative that their voices be heard when creating policy that can directly or indirectly affect their educational lives” (p. 63).

The qualitative approach provides this avenue for expression. Storytelling, as part of this research effort, is not just about retelling the past. It is also about the current lived experience of American Indian peoples in general, and Lumbee Indian students in particular. Marshall and Rossman (2006) note qualitative research is justified because “human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them are understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction” (p. 53).

Researcher Positionality and Subjectivity

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the data collection instrument. As a result, prior to proposing and conducting the research, I reflected on the roles I play beyond just data collection and consider the ways I influence and am influenced by the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Additionally, I took care to be attuned to the participants’

stories and to be sensitive to what was conveyed so that these stories were represented accurately. A first step in this process was acknowledging some of my own story.

I was raised in a predominantly Lumbee community. I attended predominantly Lumbee schools, and when choosing to go to college, I attended the local college whose rich heritage includes an early mission to educate the members of the surrounding American Indian community. A significant proportion of the students at the university where I attained my undergraduate and graduate degrees were American Indian, although not the majority. In addition, I had the support of several American Indian faculty and numerous staff members. I never had to leave my home community to attend college. In fact, I would have welcomed the opportunity to do so, but I opted to stay close to home for financial reasons. I did not leave my community until ten years ago at the age of 28. I was afforded the benefit of having all the comforts of home while pursuing my education and while entering the workforce. I began working at the local university shortly after graduation, and my work during that time and until now can be considered efforts to increase and enhance the diversity of the college environment. After five years in this role, I moved to the Triangle area to assume new duties in my current position still within the University of North Carolina system.

While my roles have changed to some degree in my current place of employment, my charge has always included providing support and retention programming for American Indian students in addition to my various other duties. This position affords me the unique opportunity to work very closely with the American Indian population of students on campus, many of whom come from my home community. Oftentimes I have some level of

knowledge regarding their families, the smaller communities of our home town they represent, and most, if not all of their high schools.

Within the context of this study, cultural meaning expressed through the stories of Lumbee Indian students are used to provide critical insight to the norms and values of American Indian students. As author of this study, I am an American Indian and member of the Lumbee tribe. My experiences and understanding of particular practices and language provide meaning and a lens that were necessary in some places to distinguish elements in the stories. My background informed the research process as the participants shared their stories of how they came to experience education within the university. This positioned me to bring an added level of interpretation and understanding that a non-Native simply could not achieve. At the same time, I acknowledge having brought some of my own biases and understandings which I took steps to minimize as described below.

Theoretical Framework

Transculturation theory is an appropriate framework for this study for several reasons. First, it is culturally-appropriate and specific to American Indian students and their experiences in mainstream education (Huffman, 2010). Transculturation theory is based upon the premise that American Indians do not have to relinquish their Indian identity in those institutions where they find themselves in the minority. In fact, it is their Indianness which serves as their anchor and source of strength to encourage them to push through times of cultural conflict and incongruence between themselves and the university (Huffman, 2010).

Second, if properly applied, transculturation theory has the ability to explain the complexities of the American Indian student experience in education. University orientation and transition programs focus on establishing student independence. Student success is rooted in students establishing their own norms and their own physical well-being and then integrating into community life. Additionally, emphasis is on establishing new relationships and friendships along with becoming academically successful. American Indian students often come from communities where their existence is based upon strong interpersonal relations with others and autonomy is established within the extended family, not independent of it. As such, American Indian students can experience cultural incongruence upon entry to the university at a level that may not be experienced by majority culture. Transculturation theory serves here to help us explain how American Indian students successfully navigate this transition within the university environment.

Third, transculturation theory operates from a standpoint of student success rather than failure. This theory treats students' cultural identity as a source of strength leading to that success. Huffman (2001) identifies four stages of transculturation: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment and participation. Stage one, or initial alienation refers to the time when students begin college journey and encounter isolation as well as the inability to relate to the greater community. An individual relies on his or her cultural background and heritage as a source of strength moves one into stage two, self-discovery. Realignment involves navigating between both the Native culture of the student as well as the greater community of the university. The American Indian student, as part of minority culture, draws on their Indigenous knowledge to stay grounded and focused. Lastly as the student

moves into the participatory phase, he or she fully utilizes their heritage as a source of strength while integrating into the college environment.

Fourth, transculturation theory provides a framework for engaging American Indian students in dialogue regarding their experience with higher education. It allows for students to be able to express their thoughts and beliefs about how they experience college life. The American Indian students' shared stories can inform university policy and procedure; Chapter 6 of this study makes some recommendations related to policies based on these findings. By understanding more about culturally relevant practices through the narratives of American Indian students, institutions have more information to assist in their being culturally responsive and supportive of the American Indian student experience.

Lastly, as the primary theoretical framework, transculturation has influenced all aspects of the research design for this study. The community of the predominantly White institution of higher learning is vastly different than the homogeneous communities some American Indian students, particularly those from rural areas, have experienced. As a result, transculturation theory is useful because inherent to this theory is a focus on socialization in new cultural settings with an emphasis on learning the new culture without relinquishing integral components of the cultural heritage the American Indian student represents (Huffman, 2010). Transculturation also dictated my participant selection of students who have been successful in the predominantly White university. To explain how participating students experienced college, I focused on their stories as given in face-to-face interviews and analyzed using narrative inquiry. Transculturation also focuses on past experience, which explains my soliciting stories of those students who have graduated from the

university. Specifics related to research design, data collection and analysis are explained in further detail in the remainder of this chapter.

Research Design

The findings of this research serves several purposes. First, it offers empirical information through students' narratives about the educational experiences of a group of nontraditional students, specifically the Lumbee, whose background is markedly different than the majority population in the institution where they studied. Next, it specifically applies a theoretical framework that is culturally-relevant and appropriate and offers a structure through which to examine the process of transculturation. Finally, it serves to inform the practices of universities to support the American Indian student experience. As such, the qualitative approach was appropriate utilizing the case study method informed by narrative inquiry.

Case Study

Case study methodology is among the most popular methodologies in social science research and allows the researcher flexibility in exploring complex phenomena. The primary advocates of case study are Stake (1995) and Yin (2009). Case study involves the investigation of cases (one or more) within a certain "bounded system" such as a university in order to address a particular research problem and requires that researchers make use of multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations and documents (Stake; Yin). Multiple sources of data serve to triangulate evidence and increase the reliability of the case study (Tellis, 1997).

Case studies can be classified in various ways. Yin (2009) defines case studies as descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. Similarly, Stake (1995) offers three classifications of cases as intrinsic, instrumental and collective. I will consider these definitions comparatively. Descriptive cases (Yin), like intrinsic cases (Stake), are used when an understanding of a particular case, such as a particular teacher or a school is needed. Instrumental cases (Stake) are similar to both Yin's exploratory and explanatory cases in that the goal is to use the case to understand a particular phenomenon beyond the case itself. As an example, the current research focuses on the experience of American Indian students in higher education and how they come to be transcultured, as opposed to focusing on just their experience as an American Indian student. Stake's collective case classification relates to studying one or more cases.

Three conditions determine the appropriateness of the case study method. Case study is an appropriate method when the research question is concerned with asking how or why a particular phenomenon works, when there is little control over the event in terms of manipulating behavior, and when the researcher wants to study a contemporary or current phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The current study sought to understand how American Indian students become transcultured within a predominantly white university utilizing the stories of recent graduates.

Case study research is a well-established method of inquiry, although it is subject to scrutiny from researchers operating from a more positivist research paradigm. A major point of contention is the ability to generalize the findings of a case study, as a case study can consist of one individual or one group. Yin (2009) addresses this by distinguishing between

analytic generalizations within social science research versus statistical generalization associated with positivist research methods. Analytic generalization compares the findings of a study to some theoretical perspective rather than drawing conclusions about a larger population. According to Stake (1995), case study provides particularization rather than generalization. The aim is not to generalize to the larger population but to gain a deeper understanding or “refinement of understanding” regarding the case. Similarly, Willis (2008) notes the strength of case studies is their ability to provide analogical reasoning, or greater understanding and similarities, as a form of knowledge about a particular case.

Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts the significance of the case study to provide meaningful data and insight to phenomena. He strongly asserts the need to have context-dependent knowledge as a goal for research because it helps deepen our understanding of a phenomenon in a natural setting. Flyvbjerg also states that generalization is not always the main goal of scientific knowledge. Because something cannot be generalized does not mean that the general knowledge gained is not of importance to a particular field. This knowledge which is gained also serves as a building block on which theory-building can be established, thus establishing case study as instrumental to theory development. Subjective bias, according to Flyvbjerg, is inherent in all forms of research and is something all researchers must contend with. Thus, case study should not be discounted when this is a matter pertaining to all methods of research. In particular, qualitative research methods, like quantitative, also have rigorous procedures and data validation processes to account for such biases.

Defining case study is important. Stake (1995) takes the approach that case study is a methodological choice of what is to be studied while Yin (2009) views case study as a

research methodology which can stand on its own. This dissertation will utilize the definition and philosophy of Stake to drive the research effort. As such, case study is seen as a method, but not a methodology, and thus must be informed by other qualitative research designs. Narrative inquiry, discussed next, will serve to guide the proposed case study research.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a burgeoning field within the realm of qualitative research. The lack of an agreed upon definition of what constitutes narrative is probably the most ubiquitous claim among those researchers who are proponents of the method (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993; Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008). However, there is consensus among the prominent researchers regarding the utility of this particular methodology to help researchers understand the complex lives of individuals. As individuals we all have a story, and as “storied individuals,” narrative inquiry provides away for us to understand the many layers that comprise our own narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

A story, or narrative, can consist of several small stories which can be pieced together to inform or form a picture of a complex phenomenon. This piecing together to construct a narrative provides a way for ourselves and others to understand the experience of our storied lives. As a result, narrative is often considered the phenomenon as well as the approach or method to understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Additionally, narrative inquiry is also about hearing the voices of others. Research participants’ voices as heard through their narratives serve as the data; therefore, narrative inquiry and analysis provide

structure to give voice to those who need to be heard. To understand an individual's experiences, there must be a way to investigate and unpack these stories—narrative inquiry provides that needed roadmap.

Connelly and Clandinin (2005) contend narrative inquiry can be differentiated based upon living and telling. Most narrative inquiry, according to this pair, focuses on the telling, which is what happens during the interview process where a research participant reflects on his or her past experiences as occurred in the current research study. Living differs in that it involves the recording of one's narrative or story as it is lived. Polkinghorne (1995) also approaches narrative from a dichotomous point of view based upon Bruner's (1985) classification of two types of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative. This classification, while similar in nature, uses various data sources and produces different end products. Paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry uses stories as data to produce taxonomies and categories. Narrative-type narrative inquiry produces stories from various events and happenings.

Riessman (1993) notes narrative provides an avenue to “analyze individuals' recollections of the past systematically, informed by narrative theory,” (p. 25). Individuals often tell stories in an unorganized way or in “bits and pieces.” Narrative analysis allows researchers to bring order to their stories to more fully explain the phenomena experienced. For the present research, an understanding of the experiences of Lumbee Indian students in higher education can best be understood by the sharing of their stories of their time within the university. Incorporating some tenets of narrative inquiry was integral to providing this understanding.

Issues of Rigor

Institutional Review Board

I sought approval from the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before pursuing contact with participants or advancing the study in any manner. Associated documents related to the IRB, including the application and email communications with potential research participants are included as appendices.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

According to Patton (2002) steps must be taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the research participants. As such, I informed the research participants that they would remain anonymous during the entire process and would be assigned a pseudonym of their choice for the research project which was reflected in all written and recorded materials. As the primary researcher, I was the only person to have full awareness of which pseudonyms belonged to each participant. Additionally, all names reflective of the research site were removed, including organizations and offices within the site. Names of individuals that were referenced by participants during the interview process were changed as well so as not to reveal the identity of faculty, staff, or other students. Transcripts, voice files, field notes and any other supporting documents from this study were in a secure file, and electronic files from interviews were saved in a password protected file accessible only by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

My experiences served to enlighten this study. I acknowledge my background in that I am from a Native community and have a strong awareness of the environment the

participants in this study come from considering it is the same hometown and community. This insider knowledge was useful when I interpreted results and analyzed data to provide context to the student experience. At the same time, I was fully cognizant of the potential bias this could have imposed, so I purposefully bracketed my assumptions and beliefs so that the essence of the participants' experiences were accurately conveyed.

Narrative analysis emphasizes establishing rapport and having a strong relationship and connection between the primary researcher and the research participants as a way to ensure trustworthiness. This is essential to getting rich, thick data descriptions (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 1998). For this study, I had already earned an established rapport and certain level of trust with the research participants. It is important to this type of study and also has implications for student participation as American Indian students are prone to be more open with someone they know and with whom there is already an established level of comfort.

Toma (2000) suggests it is the closeness of the researcher to the research participants that makes for richer, more in depth data. Having a strong connection to those being interviewed, I believe I got more meaningful data from the research participants than another researcher might have; as a result, the overall findings of the study are strengthened. In his research, Toma (2000) attributes a greater sense of the context in which a phenomenon occurs to the degree of connectedness to the participant. He notes this increases the breadth and depth of data collection and adds to the hallmarks of good qualitative research such as credibility, dependability and confirmability. Toma adds, "These are the markers of the depth of the engagement between the researcher and the subject, and thus the quality of that engagement" (p. 183).

Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) contend it is the “lack of distance” between the researcher and the informants of the research that has made their research strong. They note there are benefits and challenges to being an Indigenous researcher, researching the Indigenous. Some of the difficulty stems from engaging Indigenous peoples in research efforts using traditional methods which have often left suppressed and discriminated groups further marginalized. Working to create this closeness between the researcher and the researched reduces some of these effects. They argue that being Indigenous adds to the validity of the study. In this particular study, the researcher, who is the instrument, is a member of an Indigenous group. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) would assert there is a certain level of authenticity achieved because of the researcher’s potential to understand the data from a cultural standpoint as an insider. At the same time, this does not imply that those researchers who are not indigenous are unable to adequately and accurately elucidate the Indigenous voice in qualitative research.

In addition to the researcher-research participant relationship, I utilized member checking to ensure accuracy of data and correct interpretations of data (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). My asking participants if their accounts have been interpreted correctly strengthened the study and understanding of the experienced phenomenon. After the first interviews were transcribed, research participants were contacted via email and/or phone and asked to meet/talk for a second time to review transcripts and check for accuracy. If there were any discrepancies in the data or inaccuracies as determined by the research participants, I worked with them to correct this information. Additionally, any research participant who decided there was some information they wanted omitted after their own

personal reflection or seeing their comments in hard copy was able to do so. As the research progresses and codes and themes were generated, participants were provided a copy of their final narrative and asked to review them to make sure their story was correctly interpreted. I utilized self-reflective memos noting my reactions to the data to assist with researcher bias throughout this process (Creswell, 2007). As a final step, I offered to provide an electronic copy of the dissertation to each research participant as a final method of member checking. I also maintain close contact with my dissertation chair and methodologist who are assisting with this research.

Validity and Reliability

There are three guiding principles that help maximize the evidence collected in a case study (Yin, 2009). Additionally, these three principles help strengthen the validity and reliability of the case study: using multiple sources of evidence, creating a case study database, and maintaining a chain of evidence. For the current study, I relied on one-on-one interviews with the research participants along with artifacts as sources of evidence. Yin (2009) notes using multiple sources of evidence is most advantageous for the case study method because of “the development of converging lines of inquiry” which is a triangulation process used to corroborate evidence (p. 115). Additional details regarding interview questions and selecting research participants are outlined in the section on data collection. The case study database consists of “notes documents, tabular materials, and narratives” (p. 119) which are mainly the raw data of the study. For this particular study the case study database is presented in the final form of the published dissertation which could be accessed via the web or via the researcher.

A chain of evidence was maintained, as I logged all activities in a researcher log. This allowed me to document the rationale for making research decisions. Additionally, I actively engaged in reflexivity, which is an intentional reflection on my assumptions and thought processes as the research proceeds. Incorporating researcher reflexivity is integral to ensuring the reliability and validity of the study. The researcher log helps ensure the integrity and rigor of the research process.

Narrative researchers approach issues of validity and reliability in a different manner than members of the scientific community (Riessman, 1993). Narratives can change over time and the same experience can be recounted in “radically different ways” depending on the narrator’s audience (Riessman, 1993, p. 64). As reconstructions of past experience, the narrator may exhibit poor recall of the past or might intentionally leave things out. This begs the following questions: What is truth and accuracy in narrative? Can one say the findings of a narrative study are valid? Riessman (1993) suggests we trade the terms of validity for the following: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence and pragmatic use (p. 65). In the writing of narrative, one must keep in mind the audience and share the stories of experience in a way that “persuades” the audience to believe them. Persuasiveness is buttressed by giving support to theoretical claims through the narratives of experience. In this study, transculturation is the theoretical claim that will be highlighted and supported as told through the lens of Lumbee Indian students in higher education.

Correspondence is strengthened by taking the information I interpret back to the study participants. Member checks (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) involve the research participants reviewing transcripts and narrative excerpts from their interview for

data accuracy. Coherence is developed by reviewing the data for themes and ensuring a theme is “worked over, again and again” (p. 67). This means taking time to review the data and becoming more and more familiar with it over time. While this may be considered a “painstaking task” it allows the data to speak for itself within individual transcripts and across transcripts as well. Lastly, pragmatic use relates to “the extent which a particular study becomes the basis for others’ work” (p. 68). As a seminal piece of work regarding the Lumbee experience in higher education through the lens of transculturation, there is the potential for this study to corroborate transculturation theory and also serve as a foundation upon which other studies regarding American Indians in higher education can be based.

Limitations

This study is limited in that the research participants are a small representation of a much larger tribe within the southeastern portion of North Carolina, the Lumbee. No major generalizations can be made from this study’s findings; however, that does not mean that there is not valuable information within that can be transferred by others for their own purposes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). These findings are part of a bounded study reflecting the thoughts of a small group of Lumbee students at a particular university in the context of place and time.

Additionally, this study focuses solely on those Lumbee Indian students who successfully graduated from the academy. I am fully aware there are those students for whom success as persistence to graduation is not part of their story. I believe these stories to be of value and appreciated regarding the greater picture of American Indian student experiences in higher education. However, I contend there is also a need to understand more

about those students who successfully attained their degree as the extant literature often focuses on attrition rather than student success.

Strengths

This study can influence a body of literature regarding the experiences of American Indian students that is limited. Additionally, data related to a specific tribe, the Lumbee, informs this study. As such, this meets another need in the literature regarding American Indians in higher education, which is to understand more about American Indians in general and particular tribes specifically. My lived experience as an American Indian of the Lumbee tribe served to inform this study. Having completed my K-12 education and undergraduate and graduate degrees in my Native hometown, I used these experiences as a lens through which to view the stories shared by the research participants.

Ethics

Qualitative research often takes the researcher and the research participants on a journey. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher is often asking a respondent to reflect on their experiences and what they mean. In this particular study, the actual essence of what it is like to attend college as an American Indian student on a predominantly White campus was investigated. As such, it required participants in the study to dig deep into the meanings of this experience, and the participants and researcher navigated this journey together. As such, it was imperative that much thought is given to ethical considerations of the study.

Patton (2002) notes that “the process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn’t know—or least were not fully aware of—before the interview”

(p. 405). Additionally, the researcher, as the primary guide on this journey, receives information from this reflection and needs to be aware of the potential for revealing information to have some affect both personally and emotionally. Patton provides a checklist which can be used to account for ethical issues which can arise and should be accounted for ahead of time. I considered issues such as explaining the research purpose with clarity to include how the research participant might benefit from the study and why they should participate, to any risks the participant might encounter from participating. Additionally, I was positioned to provide information regarding counseling if needed and make referrals as well should any participants have felt the need to debrief or discuss some issue in more detail.

Data Collection

Qualitative research methods rely on four commonly utilized modes of information gathering: observation, participant observation, in-depth interviewing and document analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), although others can be used. When conducting case studies, it is recommended that the researcher draw from multiple sources of data such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to add strength to a particular study (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). Narrative inquiry encourages the incorporation of written accounts such as interviews which can be transcribed or possibly journaling exercises or letters (Marshall & Rossman). Additionally, artifacts, which can be objects that hold sentimental value and contain perhaps a valuable story of the past, can be incorporated to encourage or promote “storytelling” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Examples can be photos or family heirlooms that might be a significant part of the story of the research participants. Artifacts serve as a way to generate

conversation and provide an avenue to begin exploring the participants experience within higher education. Participants were asked via email to bring along any artifacts they would like to their first interview. Further details regarding the solicitation of artifacts are outlined later in this chapter.

Site Selection

Transculturation theory specifically addresses the experience of American Indian Students in “mainstream educational institutions” (Huffman, 2010, p. 184). As such, the site for this study was a large, predominantly white institution (PWI) that is also a public research university located in the southeastern United States. Context is an important aspect to understanding the complex nature of lived experience. Marshall and Rossman (2006) note, “The study should be conducted in the setting where all this complexity operates over time and where data on the multiple version of reality can be collected” (p. 53). The university represented a diverse body of students with a small population of American Indian students, mostly from within the state. In terms of tribal representation, there is a predominant presence of Lumbee Indian students at this site.

Interviews

Narrative inquiry informs the interview process by stressing the importance of creating conditions that lead to conversation (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Gathering stories requires spending time with the research participants and developing a relationship that facilitates story telling. Additionally, the interview must create a space which encourages narrative to develop (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), so interview prompts are loosely held in the mind of the researcher (Josselson & Lieblich).

This does not mean that the research question and additional interview prompts do not have a place in this process. The interviews were guided by the research question and the theoretical framework, with the research question focusing this study. Interview prompts (Appendix E) related to the theoretical framework informed the interview process by providing a roadmap. I engaged participants in sharing stories of their experience in higher education which consisted of several small stories over time. Keeping openness to the interview format allowed the participants to share and bring me into their world. As such, the interviews began with a general question. Participants were invited to share the story of how they came to choose their alma mater. If participants brought along artifacts, they were asked to share the story behind their artifacts and their significance.

Interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participant using a digital audio recording device via the online application Audacity, which stores data as .mp3 files. Data files were stored on a password protected computer and kept in my possession.

Participant Selection

Participant selection is influenced by several parameters. First, tribal affiliation was the overarching determinant. Because there are so many differences among and between tribes, I believed it was beneficial to gain a more in-depth understanding of one tribe's experience, as opposed to several. As a result, a purposive sample (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) of students from the Lumbee Indian tribe was selected for participation in this study. Lumbees are also the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River in North Carolina (Lowery, 2010). Additionally, only students who are from the southeastern region of the state were

included as they share a similar set of experiences due to being raised in a rural environment versus a suburban or urban area.

Second, alumni who graduated within the last five years were asked to participate in this study. This allowed for the most recent graduates to share stories about what it was like to attend a PWI. Additionally, these graduates were deemed likely to draw on their experiences more readily as opposed to those who graduated beyond five years ago.

Third, the nature of qualitative research is to focus on smaller samples of participants compared to the quantitative approach, where large numbers are needed to generalize to a larger population (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Smaller samples allow for an in-depth understanding, and narrative inquiry focuses more on depth of understanding rather than breadth (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Riessman (1993) reiterates that narrative analysis demands small numbers and is “not useful” for studies involving larger numbers (p. 69). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate sample size is dictated by “redundancy” or when there is no new information being added to the data from new research participants (p. 202). Josselson and Lieblich (2003) assert the preciseness with which one can determine an adequate sample size at the outset of a study such as narrative is shrouded in ambiguity. However, they advise a goal of at least five participants is suitable and can be adjusted as necessary. Additionally, for a dissertation, the researcher should aim for 20-30 total contact hours. As such, a total of 16 students, both male and female, to provide diversity in terms of gender perspective, participated in this study.

Alumni were recruited via email inviting them to participate in this study (Appendix C). I consulted with the American Indian Support Center (AISC) at the university to send an

email to alumni who graduated in the last five years and had a previous home address from Dogwood and Azalea counties. The AISC maintains a current database of alumni, and a report was generated to reflect alumni with the criteria as noted in this study. The initial email informed potential participants of the nature of this study, which was to understand the experience of American Indian students in higher education. Students indicating they would like to participate received a follow-up email (Appendix C) with additional details regarding the project and a mutually agreed upon date, time and location for an interview. They were encouraged to bring along any artifacts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) which were used to initiate conversation and discuss their experiences. Attached to the email was an informed consent form (Appendix B) which described the research project and asked for the participant's signature. This form was reviewed before any portion of the interview began. Participants were informed they could decline participation at any time and any information they had provided would be destroyed.

Participants were asked to participate in a member checking process which constituted a second interview. They were contacted once again via email (Appendix C) and asked to meet or talk via telephone to review their transcribed interview. Additionally, this allowed me to ask for clarification on statements that needed more detail or explanation.

Artifacts

Artifacts can be a valuable source of information into the storied lives of individuals. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate these items can be photos of events, individuals or groups and can include "memory boxes," which are collections of items which have significant meaning and can trigger memories of an experience (p. 114). After agreeing to

participate in the research project, participants were encouraged to bring artifacts with them to the interview that served as special reminders or memories of their experience as an undergraduate. This request was made as part of a second email (Appendix C) confirming participants' agreement to participate in the project. The use of such artifacts helped the research participant and the researcher engage in the sharing of information and constructing stories.

Encouraging stories from participants can be a challenge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the context of this study, artifacts were used for the purpose of generating conversation and creating a level of comfort between me and the participants of this study. Additionally, it was my intention to use these artifacts to help the participants feel as if they had been invited to have a conversation about their past experiences rather than an interview. As such, the artifacts presented in this research were not a part of the analysis and not used as data.

Data Analysis

Organizing the data from the research participants in a way that elucidates the experience of American Indian students in higher education is a daunting task. Where narrative analysis is concerned, Riessman (1993) notes that "there is no standard set of procedures compared to some forms of qualitative analysis" (p. 54). Just as there are many definitions of narrative, there are myriad methods of analyzing narrative data.

Data was organized into individual transcripts of the research participants. Interviews were recorded using Audacity, an online software recording application which was downloaded to a laptop computer that was password locked and accessible only by the

researcher. After an initial pilot test, I recognized the interview questions (Appendix D) as designed in a first draft were not adequate. First, they did not promote student engagement in storytelling. Rather, they elicited straightforward facts without detailed accounts of their experiences. Second, I noted that the responses from the piloted interview did not align with the theoretical framework of transculturation. Interview questions were redesigned to encourage deeper and broader explanations regarding the experience of the participants as American Indian students at the university. The new interview guide (Appendix E) was submitted to IRB and approved for use in the study.

After each interview, I immediately made notes and reflections on the data. If there were any areas that were not clear or needed further explanation, the participant was contacted. Once all the interviews were completed, they were transcribed using a professional transcription service. The transcribed interviews were reviewed individually for grammatical errors and all identifying information was removed to ensure anonymity. Participants received their individual transcripts to ensure the account of their experiences as recorded during our interview time was accurate. Additionally, a participant profile was written for each student and they were asked via email to review and consent that this was an accurate characterization. After receiving confirmation from each participant, I proceeded with analysis.

The analytic process of coding and establishing themes within the data was an arduous process. This is when a “focus for analysis often emerges or becomes clearer” (Riessman, 1993, p. 57). Before codes were assigned, the data was reduced by initially tagging and labeling (Baptiste, 2001). This process involved looking through the data and

noting “bits and pieces” of information that might have particular meaning as it relates to the research study (p. 10). After tagging, I looked back through the data to assign labels which were either literal words from the data or terms or phrases I used to move toward arranging the data in groups. Grouping the data (Baptiste, 2001) takes the tagged and labeled data and organizes it into related groups and codes. This grouping led to the generation of themes within the data. At the onset, I coded the transcripts according to each phase of transculturation using a set of a priori codes (Creswell, 2007).

At various points throughout the analysis, I found that I was looking so closely through this lens that I was not reviewing the data openly to determine which other themes might naturally emerge. Instead of thinking about whether or not a student became transcultured, I took myself back to the original research question, which simply asking how they experienced college life as an American Indian student on a predominantly White university. For the time, I bracketed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) my understanding of transculturation to openly code the data. I would later determine whether or not transculturation had occurred. After the analyses, I developed a list of initial codes which were reduced to a set of analytic codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I alternated between the use of NVivo, electronic software for qualitative analysis, and manual coding and analysis. Three major themes emerged and are explained in Chapter 5. First, Chapter 4 provides participant profiles.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

This chapter provides insight into the 16 research participants of my study. All participants represent the same region of the southeastern United States and are members of the Lumbee tribe. However, it is important to note that while they share similar backgrounds and experiences, each participant has his or her own identity and unique experience of growing up Lumbee. Additionally, they all have varying experiences navigating Southern Area University. It is important to understand their individual identities and voices in this research. While there were some recognized commonalities between and among participants, the aim of this research was not to represent a singular Lumbee experience.

Overview

Preceding the profiles of the participants is a demographic table which lists each participant and pertinent information that serves as a clear and concise reference tool as each story unfolds. In addition to gender, first generation college status, and their completed major, this Table 1 also indicates the current professional and/or educational status of each participant. Lastly, it is noted whether participants returned to their home communities after graduation. At the present time, only three of the 16 participants have returned home. Some of the participants have established permanent residences outside of their home community, many of which are in the area of Southern Area University. For those who are completing graduate and professional degrees full-time, it has not yet been determined whether they will eventually return to their home communities or reside in other areas.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Age	Degree Attained	First Generation	Current Profess/Educ Status	Ret Home
Alicia	F	24	Psychology	No	Enrolled in Prof Sch	N
Becky	F	23	Education	Yes	Enrolled in Grad Sch	N
Caroline	F	24	Sociology	Yes	Employed	N
Clifford	M	26	Amer Ind Studies and Sociology (Double)	Yes	Employed/Preparing for Grad Sch	Y
Elizabeth	F	23	Biology	No	Enrolled in Grad Sch	N
Emily	F	22	Amer Ind Studies and Sociology (Double)	No	Preparing for future Grad Sch	Y
James	M	23	Sociology	Yes	Employed/Preparing for nursing school	N
Jordyn	F	28	Exercise and Sports Science w/ Amer Ind Studies (minor)	Yes	Employed/Completed Grad Sch	N
Lisa	F	26	Psychology	Yes	Employed	N
Matthew	M	22	Amer Ind Studies	No	Enrolled in Prof Sch	N
Nathan	M	24	Amer Ind Studies	Yes	Employed/Completed Grad Sch	N
Paul	M	23	Psychology	Yes	Enrolled in Prof Sch	N
Sage	F	23	Psychology	No	Employed/Enrolled in Graduate School	N
Sarah	F	22	Psychology	Yes	Preparing for future Grad Sch	Y
Tiffany	F	25	Psychology and Amer Ind Studies(minor)	No	Employed/Completed Grad Sch	N
Thomas	M	27	Biology w/ Chemistry (minor)	No	Completed Prof Sch	N

Table 2 provides a listing of frequently-referenced programs, groups and places by participants in my study. The table serves as a quick reference point for the reader as many of these items are found throughout the participant profiles and narratives which follow in my study.

Table 2

Frequently Referenced Items

Azalea County	Neighboring county to Dogwood. Very similar characteristics and home to many Lumbee Indians.
Dogwood County	The home county of the majority of the participants in this study. Is fairly rural and a majority of Lumbees reside in this area. While rich and vibrant in history and culture, it is lacking in economic development when compared to the area of Southern Area University.
Excellence In Action	A visitation program for students to explore Southern Area University and get a first-hand look at the campus through an overnight stay and meet and greet with various faculty, staff and students.
Indian Country	A term that often refers to American Indian lands, communities, tribes and general areas. It can also be used as a collective in reference to American Indian peoples.
Native Student Singers	A subgroup of the Native Student Organization which performs vocal selections and some spoken word.
Native Student Organization (NSO)	Undergraduate student organization with mostly American Indian students. The goal is to educate the campus about Native issues and also create community for American Indian students and others on campus.
State University	A rival university of Southern Area
Southern Exposure	Residential program which allows entering in-state students to attend summer school and become acclimated to the campus before enrolling full-time in the fall semester.
Tiger	Refers to the mascot of Southern Area University.
West University	A rival university of Southern Area

Participant Profiles

The following profiles provide a brief overview of each participant in my study. Each profile was developed after careful review of each individual participant's transcribed interview. All interviews followed a general structure which allowed participants to reflect on their journey to and through Southern Area University. Highlights of each story are reflected in the profiles in this chapter and are meant to provide just one lens through which to view each participant. Participants were asked to review their individual profile for approval and provide any edits as warranted. Additionally, participants provided their own brief biography which served to expand their profile as necessary.

Alicia

Growing up a Southern Area fan was easy for Alicia as her dad attended professional school at Southern Area, although he was not what you would consider a "hardcore" fan of SAU. However, her dad's affiliation with the school "drove her passion" to attend as well. In fact, Alicia is enrolled at SAU in a professional program. Her decision to attend SAU was part of her desire to attend college away from her home community. While she is very connected to her family and community, she also wanted the experience of living away from home for a while. Having never been away from her home county, Alicia wanted to "be more independent" and experience the world on her own. Southern Area provided the distance away, but its proximity was also near enough to get home if she desired. She was also looking for a challenge, and the rigor of the academic experience at SAU was something she welcomed. She knew that if she met the demands of the undergraduate curriculum at SAU she would be prepared for the next chapter of her life in graduate or professional school.

In addition to discussing the rigor of Southern Area, Alicia made many references to “fitting in” and finding her “place” on campus as some of her challenges. She recalled how she knew SAU would be different, but she did not quite understand the degree to which that would be true for her and many of her friends. At one point, she noted the only thing about SAU that was familiar to her or made her comfortable was the group of friends who came with her to college and the few she knew who were already at SAU.

Over time, she created a community on campus and attributes much of that to attending the campus visitation program Excellence in Action and the summer residential program Southern Exposure. In particular, at Southern Exposure she began to realize she was different because of her academic preparation, her culture, and even her speech. Over time, she began to find her place and settled into Southern Area. She even noted it took the course of a year for her to really begin to feel as if she were at home at the university. She did successfully complete her degree, and during that time became associated with several American Indian student organizations such as the Native Student Organization her sorority.

As an American Indian student on the campus, she notes it was important for her to achieve balance between the two worlds of academics and then spiritual/cultural connections. She notes that her upbringing taught her to absorb as much knowledge as possible, and that even when you thought you had learned all you could, there was still more to learn. For her, knowledge is power and you can never have enough. In conjunction with academic life, it was also important to be mindful of her spirituality and cultural identity. She notes this particular part of her world keeps her “grounded, humble, thankful and open to new beliefs.

It's within this world that I grow as a person." Combining the two worlds allowed her to be a "better student, tribal member, and at the end of the day, a human being."

Becky

Becky is originally from Azalea County, adjacent to Dogwood County, and admits she applied to Southern Area University because others around her were applying. In fact, she had not really given a lot of thought to applying to college until her senior year. It just happened that she had attended Excellence in Action, so she had some knowledge of the university. Becky was the only student from her high school to enroll at SAU, and she was not familiar with anyone coming from neighboring Dogwood County. She made a deal with her mom that if she did not like SAU after six months, she could return home.

Over time, Becky found her place on campus, and upon completion of her undergraduate degree, she decided to pursue graduate school at SAU as well. After completing her master's degree, she enrolled in a Ph.D. program at another university within her home state. While at SAU, she was heavily involved with programs in the Diversity Affairs Office which houses Excellence in Action. For three years she volunteered for Excellence in Action as a way to give back to a program that had given so much to her. Additionally, she volunteered with the American Indian Support Center and was involved with the NSO and her sorority.

She shared the story of finding her place on campus, literally while riding her new bicycle. Before leaving her community, she determined everyone else had bicycles on campus so she would need one as well. She recalled the day she rode across campus and happened upon a fraternity house, not really knowing what she had found. Becky quickly

left and became lost as she tried to find her residence hall. Along the way, she noticed the somewhat familiar face of an American Indian student she had seen previously at a conference. She immediately called out to him because she “just knew he was Native” and they would somehow be able to relate. She credits this interaction as the beginning of her community at SAU because she was able to get connected to other students, groups and faculty and staff in the Native community on campus due to this chance meeting.

I heard the ubiquitous tale of “being the token Indian” and the “spokesperson for all things Indian” in almost every interview. Similarly, Becky described the weight and responsibility of this which was often met with a degree of ambivalence. There were times she was proud to share her culture, her history and use these opportunities to educate others. However, she expressed her frustration with the times where she was the only one in a classroom or small group discussion and she was expected to be and know all things Indian. Admittedly there were more highs than lows, and she successfully completed her undergraduate degree and reflected on her time at SAU with a fondness.

Caroline

Caroline, similar to many of the participants in this study, came to Southern Area by way of Excellence in Action while in high school and then by attending the Southern Exposure summer program before enrolling in the fall semester. She was discouraged from applying to SAU by her guidance counselors because they felt her grade point average was not adequate, and her counselor would reiterate how difficult it was to get into the school. She recalled being admitted to Southern Area while her best friend was not. They thought they would attend together, but this did not happen. However, Caroline had a sister who was

enrolled at SAU, so she knew she would know her and they would have a connection while on campus.

Caroline shared her perspective of coming to understand what it meant to be Lumbee on the campus of SAU. She admitted she did not grow up attending powwows and participating in what others would deem traditional cultural activities, but she knew she was Native and proud. What she had never experienced was how her identity would make her “set apart” from others on the campus, sometimes in good ways and other times not. She shared a story of being on campus with another non-Native student, and upon learning Caroline was Native American, the student asked what she did for Thanksgiving. Caroline went on to tell him this embellished, stereotypical account of how her family would invite others over to their teepee, and they would eat deer and buffalo. The student seemingly intrigued was amazed until Caroline admitted her fabricated account of their holiday activities. She reiterated that her family was “just like everyone else” in that they gathered around the table to eat turkey and dressing and enjoy the company of family and friends.

It was this experience and others that would serve as a reminder to Caroline that she was different and would be viewed in ways that she had not encountered in Dogwood County. More often than not, she turned these moments into sources of empowerment. She became more educated about who she was so she could readily articulate to others information about American Indian culture in general and Lumbees specifically. Caroline expressed how much she appreciated organizations like the NSO and her sorority which helped her grow as a Lumbee person. She went on to hold leadership positions in these organizations as well.

Caroline accomplished her goal of completing her sociology degree in four years. She indicated it took her until her junior year of college to settle down academically, while she achieved her social fit much faster. It was interesting that she pointed out the “weight” of the responsibility to various Native student organizations and causes due to the lack of a critical mass of American Indian students on the campus. She noted those American Indian students who chose to get involved in these arenas often felt stretched thin, but it was important to be a part of these initiatives in order make sure the Native student experience was rich and alive. Her experiences within the university inspired her to pursue professional roles post-graduation that impact the lives of pre-college students to encourage their pursuit of higher education. She currently holds a position which seeks to create a pipeline initiative for many first-generation and underserved populations to attend college.

Clifford

When I asked Clifford to share with me how he arrived at the decision to attend SAU, I was caught a bit off guard. He admitted this was not his first choice, and he was a huge West fan, which is the antithesis of a SAU Tiger. He never considered West as a choice for college, but he was a big fan of their athletics. He became serious about attending college during his sophomore year of high school. Applying and gaining admission to college became somewhat of a competition between him and one of his best friends who had always wanted to go to college and attain a degree.

Clifford admits when he arrived on campus, things were immediately different from his prior experience growing up in Dogwood County. He noted while there was some degree of culture shock, he was enamored with the diversity of the people and the size of the

campus. He was “starting a new chapter, a new life,” and he was excited about it. The excitement waned as he began to deal with being away from home. A self-proclaimed “homebody,” he missed his home and family terribly and spoke with his mom via phone daily. This resulted in him wanting to go home every weekend during his first semester, and his mom was happy to oblige by picking him up.

Surprisingly, Clifford began to feel much more at home and at ease during his second semester of college. This is when he pledged his fraternity and became connected to other American Indian males on the campus. He credits the fraternity for helping him to find his place and also his voice as a Native person on campus. It was this connection that led to his involvement with other organizations such as the NSO and the Native community in general at SAU. Having this community was invaluable to him because it was his reminder of home. American Indian people were not plentiful enough to be seen walking around the campus all the time, and there were no familial relations such as the ones he found on the “long dirt road” where he resided in Dogwood County. The Lumbee dialect was not audible in the classroom or in some group settings as it was replaced by “proper” speech and other languages at times. It struck me that Clifford said when he began to try to speak proper and use the “right words” he often had this internal struggle of wondering am I “turning my back on my people?” He later resolved he was actually helping his people by helping himself become a person who could navigate the world outside of Dogwood County. In doing so he could take his newfound knowledge to his community to help them in return.

Clifford struggled to align his wants for the future with where he excelled academically. Ultimately he wanted to ensure that his current educational pursuits would

lead to future professional employment that in some way would assuage the socioeconomic stumbling blocks so prevalent in his community. Initially, like many students, he was going to pursue a major in the sciences with the ambition of becoming a physician. He quickly changed his interests in the sciences after taking his first biology class and realized medicine was not what he wanted to do, yet he could not produce an answer in regard to what he did want to do. Although he has completed his undergraduate degree and has returned to his community, he still struggles with this question. He currently has a job back in Dogwood County, and he is planning to return to school in the near future to pursue an advanced degree in graduate school. He is preparing to take the GRE while he works to provide for himself and assist his family.

Elizabeth

Attending SAU had always been Elizabeth's dream. It was important for her to continue the family legacy of attending because the loyalty to SAU ran through her veins. Both parents and her brother attended before her, so she kept the tradition alive. When she arrived on campus, it was a "normal thing" because she had grown up coming to campus for football and basketball games, alumni family events. Being on the campus was not new to her, but being a student certainly was. Elizabeth was probably the most comfortable with settling into SAU because her roommate was also her cousin, and she had a brother and another cousin on campus and she knew folks in the area as well. She observed that her friends who were here for the first time had a bit more difficulty with the transition due to the large number of people who were "different" than them. While Elizabeth had to get used to this as well, she had at least had more exposure and knew this was part of what she would

experience as she began this new journey on campus. Elizabeth also grew up in one of the more diverse parts of Dogwood County, but her high school was predominantly American Indian.

Elizabeth offered a somewhat different perspective when it came to the role of her immediate family, in this case her parents, when it came to her transition. Many of the other participants shared stories of the struggle to balance college demands with going home every weekend at the encouragement of family or just a personal need to be back in the community for church or family events. Elizabeth had a different experience because her parents had traveled this road before. They knew the importance of her building her “own community” and making her own “niche” on campus and the surrounding area. Elizabeth also realized she could not keep holding on to “what was comfortable” in order to become part of campus life. This made her transition to the university a bit easier to navigate, yet it did not always translate to smooth sailing during her entire time.

Tackling the academics of SAU proved to be the most arduous task for Elizabeth. She reflected on an opportunity she had to write an essay where she explained her academic experience. In that essay she stresses she “felt like I was in a race and I had bricks tied to my feet and I was trying to run and compete with everybody else.” Her use of this metaphor struck a chord with me as it brought to mind the stories of other participants who indicated their academic struggles due to feeling their educational experience prior to the university environment left them feeling deficient.

Another aspect of her academic struggle was her major in the sciences. She talked about entering some of her higher level science labs with little student diversity as she

observed, and most often she would be the only American Indian student in the course. As she reflected on this time, she wondered why more American Indian students did not pursue the sciences. Oftentimes she knew this answer as it related to the rigor of the courses, but she wondered if anyone else observed this. She discussed how this was at times a lonely existence when you are in a classroom “full of strangers” and things tended to “get worse” the more advanced her classes became. However, Elizabeth did rise above and completed her degree. She is currently enrolled in graduate school pursuing an advanced degree in the sciences.

Emily

Emily is a recent graduate of Southern Area and originally from Dogwood County. Even as a child, she was very aware of SAU and she knew this is where she wanted to go to college. She does not really attribute anything to her heightened sensitivity to all things SAU, it just always was. She admits it was not so much about the athletics as it was the overall reputation of SAU and the academics. She applied to only a few other schools, but when she heard from SAU early decision, her decision was made.

During our discussion, she explained the significance of her graduation cap. I had asked that participants bring any special mementos from their time at SAU, and while Emily did not bring her cap with her she described it in detail. It was in these details that I gleaned so much about her experience at SAU. Emily noted that in her “tiny little cap” were the “biggest parts” of her story at SAU.

She noted there were two letters which were tucked inconspicuously underneath which were written by her parents when they left her at her new home in the fall of her first

year. They took the time to write down their thoughts, wishes and instructions for Emily as they would leave her to begin this journey. Emily had tucked the letters away after she started college and serendipitously discovered them as she neared her graduation. She considered them a representation of her “foundation” for her success. She credited her parents for the strong support they gave her as an undergrad, attributing their relationship to her success at SAU. It was important that these letters be a part of her special graduation day because they were the “stepping stones” to the start of her SAU journey.

Additionally, she had some bumble bees on top of her cap which represented the sorority she was a member of during her time at SAU. She credits the sorority for molding and shaping her identity as a Native person and as a Native woman. It was here she learned so much about her culture while she experienced the bonds of sisterhood. She recalled how she would go home almost every weekend during her first semester and first year. Although her mom would often come pick her up, it was her mother who also noted this pattern of behavior and encouraged her to spend more time engaging the campus so she would not look back one day with regret. Support from groups like her sorority, the NSO and the advice of her adviser and individuals in the American Indian Support Center helped her become more comfortable and settled on campus.

Lastly, she noted the feathers which were hanging from her cap along with her tassel. These were a familiar sight as I had seen them from other participants. Emily described these with such appreciation as they represented the culmination of her hard work as a student and as an American Indian Studies major. She looked at them with a gleam in her eyes because they spoke to her and to me and said “job well done.” She had finished and she

realized she was a part of something that was bigger than her and she had a source of pride. She knew that many had come this way, but not everyone had completed the task, yet she had. Emily has since returned to her home community and is currently completing pre-requisites to gain acceptance to a nurse practitioner program.

James

James is an only child who grew up in a single parent household and is a first-generation college student. James had never been to the campus of Southern Area University until his junior year of high school when he attended Excellence in Action. After Excellence in Action, he decided he was definitely applying to SAU, and he knew this was the place for him. He admits to being very intimidated about the size of SAU, but he felt confident he could find a community and family on the campus. One of the ways James achieved this was to attend the Southern Exposure program before enrolling in the fall which introduced him to campus life. He acknowledged many of the relationships he developed during this time were integral to his successful journey in college.

James did not come from a family with great financial means, but he was supported in other ways. He received much encouragement from his mom as she wanted him to be successful, but the cost to her was her son leaving home. However, James says his mom knew there “was not a lot of opportunity” at home and he needed to take this next step. He speaks of his family with great affection and is very appreciative of their support of his educational journey at Southern Area. While he is very aware of his Lumbee identity, it was interesting to hear him talk about how this awareness and understanding was deepened when he came to SAU. He immediately got involved with the NSO where he participated in

various activities aimed at increasing awareness of Native issues, and oftentimes it was his own awareness that was perhaps most significantly impacted. Like many of the participants, he talked about how his knowledge of who he was as a Lumbee and his awareness of other American Indians, and issues within the context of Indian tribes and communities across Indian Country were broadened after enrolling at Southern Area. He frequently encountered lots of questions about American Indians in general and Lumbees specifically, so he felt the need to become more educated so as to educate others.

He admits that his involvement and leadership within American Indian initiatives waned to some degree after the first couple of years. This did not mean he was not involved, but he turned more of his focus to his academics and planning for his future. James realized he needed to increase his commitment to his studies as well so that he could move on to other personal and professional goals upon graduation. Currently working full-time and living in the area of SAU, his aim is to attend nursing school and join the healthcare field.

Jordyn

Jordyn was very involved in her culture and various activities related to American Indians and minority groups on campus. She was also heavily involved with many initiatives associated with the Diversity Affairs Office (DAO) to include Diverse Student Recruitment and Excellence in Action. She only applied to two colleges while finishing high school, with Southern Area being one and Eastern University being the other. From a very young age, she had always dreamed of attending Southern Area with the understanding that “you needed to go to college to have a good life.” No matter what, she knew she was going to move away from home to have her college experience.

She was offered a prestigious scholarship which she accepted to attend SAU. For Jordyn, having the financial means to achieve her education and graduate with little debt was essential. She had a sister who was part of the SAU family, so it was imperative for her to have this assistance in order to be less of a burden on her family. Jordyn also noted it was a comfort to know her sister was at SAU because she would know at least one person if she initially knew no one else.

One of Jordyn's initial concerns was her ability to recreate the family unit and experience she had back home. She talked about how she defines community as family because she interacted with everyone from her grandparents to her cousins on a weekly basis, and sometimes daily. It was important to have these same kinds of connections on campus, and she found them through various initiatives with DAO and the NSO.

Jordyn was and still is very connected to the cultural traditions of attending powwows and traditional Native singing. Additionally, she once performed as a powwow dancer. She described an instance when she was dressed in her traditional regalia and was walking across the campus of SAU after a cultural event. She encountered a passerby who looked at her and raised her hand in a stereotypical fashion and said "How" as she passed her by. Taken by surprise, Jordyn recalls this as one of the first major instances to make her aware that she was not at home in the safety and comfort of her community. She realized her traditions and values would face certain scrutiny. However, she could tackle such adversity by becoming more educated about her culture as a means to develop her "voice as a woman" to empower herself and others.

Lisa

Lisa found her calling while attending Southern Area University. It is at SAU where she says she developed her passion for mental health and serving disadvantaged populations. Lisa was a first-generation college student, but she comes from a family that valued education and supported her educational endeavors. After completing her undergraduate degree, she continued her educational pursuits by attending graduate school in another state which took her quite some distance from home. She embraced her time away, and after completing her graduate studies, she moved to another state for employment. After a brief stint away, she moved back to the east coast and is currently employed at Southern Area University. Her hope is to continue her personal and professional development by pursuing a doctoral degree and teaching in higher education.

Lisa envisioned herself as part of the community of SAU after she visited and participated in various programs offered by the university. She indicated when she walked across campus she felt at home. Knowing many of the Native students currently enrolled assisted with her decision to enroll. This comforted her, and she felt she would get the experience of being away at a prestigious university while still being close enough to family and friends to visit home.

While at SAU, she was very involved on campus and participated in many of the student organizations that focused on American Indian students and initiatives. Getting involved and contributing to the Native community on campus came naturally as this is where she found her niche. At the same time, there were copious moments where she questioned whether she really fit as she thought about her broader campus experience. She

talked often about having to explain “who she was” or “what she was” as opposed to how she interacted in her home community where you were known because you were Lumbee. While she knew who she was and was proud of her identity, it became burdensome at times when she had to explain to others and carry the load as the spokesperson for all Natives and all Lumbees.

Lisa also carried the weight of being the first in her family to go to college, but that weight motivated her to degree completion. She often reflected on various academic and personal struggles, but “giving up was not an option” because there was no way she was giving in and going home. She was the first to go to college, and she was going to be the first to complete a degree at Southern Area University. Additionally, she felt a responsibility to her community. She felt as if everyone “was looking at her” to be successful, and this also added pressure which she managed, over time, to use as a positive to propel her forward. Lisa received an academic scholarship to attend SAU, and she knew this was an opportunity she was not going to squander even on her toughest days. Over time, she found herself and her passions which resulted in a change of major and a new focus. Lisa is grateful to her experiences at SAU because they helped augment her understanding of who she was as a person and as a Lumbee. She notes, “Part of college is learning who you are and really just becoming more aware about yourself.”

One of her goals upon degree completion was to return home because she had always desired to “help my people.” While she did not return to her home community in Dogwood County, her current work seeks to establish a pipeline for students to find their way to higher education in general with a strong emphasis on Southern Area University. Lisa’s goal is to

help other Lumbees understand it is possible to leave home and survive in college. Equally important to Lisa is to promulgate an understanding that service to the community by returning home or living away can be achieved.

Matthew

Matthew was not the first in his family to go to college, but he was the first to make the decision to attend college away from home. Both his parents and his brother and sister had attended a local college, so Matthew's moving away was a first for all of them. He had initially considered going to West Point or the military, but after attending several different Southern Area visitation events while in high school including Excellence in Action, he decided he would apply to SAU. Matthew states that one of the things that surprised yet comforted him about SAU was during the visitations when he realized there were so many students and some employees from his home community on campus. This allowed him to see a thriving Native community and further encouraged him that this was the place for him.

To say Matthew got involved while he was on campus is an understatement. He quickly found his place, and as a natural leader, he sought out many activities that would allow him to develop as a person. But he also sought to develop his Native voice, and he did so as a representative of the Native Student Organization and his fraternity. His adviser would counsel him about achieving the right balance between making contributions in the classroom as well as the campus community. Matthew revealed during his interview that this was actually one of the ways he made a successful transition. He would not characterize himself as homesick, but he did miss his family and friends from Dogwood County. To keep his mind off of that, he became involved on campus to help his transition. He admitted he

“probably should have transitioned a little bit less,” but overall he settled in fairly well at the university.

Because of his involvement on campus, Matthew was widely known. He had friends in various circles and communities across campus, both minority and non-minority, and was well-known by various faculty and staff. This was also something Matthew admits he wanted as part of his experience. He really embraced the diversity of people and backgrounds, and this excited him. At the same time, he admits, “There was always something there about having people from home around that made it more comfortable” to be on the campus. The group of students entering SAU from Dogwood County with Matthew was probably the largest in the history of the university.

Matthew struggled most readily with his academics. He describes his first year as “academically horrible.” He struggled to find his fit and also reconcile his high school preparation and performance with the demands he experienced in the classroom. Like many of his peers, while he excelled in high school, he was taken aback by how advanced students from other school systems and backgrounds seemed to be, noting their struggles were not as readily observed.

Additionally, once Matthew settled into campus life, he struggled to make sense of the lack of American Indian students on the campus. The lack of a large American Indian student presence shaped much of Matthew’s experience and actually fueled his desires to become active in ensuring currently enrolled American Indian students were successful. He believed this would best demonstrate to potential Native students that they, too, could find a place at SAU and be successful. He worked directly with recruitment and visitation

programs focused on increasing American Indian students, and Matthew was fortunate to see his vision of continued enrollment of Native students come to fruition.

Through the various struggles, Matthew eventually hit his stride and excelled both inside and outside of the classroom. To increase his personal awareness of American Indian issues and buttress his argument for increased Native presence, he pursued a major in American Indian Studies. Upon graduation from Southern Area, he gained admission to several professional school programs and is currently pursuing his professional studies at Southern Area.

Nathan

Strong ties to family and church characterize Nathan. His grandparents and mother were his main family influences in his upbringing. In fact, it was their influence which helped him make the decision to attend Southern Area. It was his grandfather who gave Nathan two choices, to either attend Southern Area or West University. Because Nathan had always been a West fan, he just assumed he would attend there. Nathan was more familiar with Southern Area, so he visited West University to make his final decision, after which he decided Southern Area would be the place he would attend.

He is deeply connected to his faith and strong Christian beliefs. In fact, many of the struggles Nathan experienced often came when he found his family values and faith in conflict with the world around him at Southern Area. He recalled his first night on campus when he encountered a homeless man who was drunk on the steps of a local church. He was immediately struck by the seeming lack of respect and reverence for the church. Nathan described this as the first moment he realized he was not in Dogwood County anymore, and

things here were going to be very different from the safety and security he found in the place he called home.

Academic struggles marked the early years for Nathan at Southern Area. He indicated he made his first F grade, and at that point he made the decision he was going to return home. With one grandparent offering to bring him home and the other asserting he would have to stay, Nathan made the decision to stick it out and complete his undergraduate degree.

Nathan's main motivation and drive to attend college were heavily influenced by his community and his tribe. Issues impacting the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples, especially his own tribe, are Nathan's passion. He noted his entire purpose in earning his education was to one day return to his home and serve as an advocate for his people. He credits his culture and his faith for keeping him balanced and focused. Nathan was also involved in his Native American fraternity, and this special brotherhood provided a source of support during his time at SAU. He continues to be involved with the organization today. Additionally, after completing his undergraduate degree, he completed his master's degree and desires to complete another degree specifically related to his healthcare interests in nursing.

Paul

Paul characterized himself as a life-long Tiger fan "through and through." Of all the participants interviewed, Paul was arguably the interviewee who was most settled on coming to Southern Area University and confident in his ability to gain admission. In fact, SAU was the only university to which he applied. I asked him about his plan if he did not receive an

offer from SAU; he informed me that he completed an early decision application so he knew he had some time to spare if he needed to complete other applications. Paul, like many of the other participants, had attended Excellence in Action and Southern Exposure prior to enrolling full-time in the fall of his first year. He credits these programs with helping to give him a first look into college life.

He admits the early years at SAU were a bit challenging due to his lack of academic preparedness and adjusting to the diversity of the campus. Paul acknowledged that while he appreciated his high school and had some great experiences, he quickly found himself feeling underprepared for the rigor of Southern Area. He was a diligent worker in high school and took the most challenging courses offered, yet he felt he was still lacking in preparation. He was academically successful and finished his undergraduate degree, but he had to work hard. Paul noted it was the instilled value of working diligently that helped him “buckle down” so he would not “flunk out” of the university.

Paul reflected on how his home community of Dogwood County was so different in that everyone knew everyone back home and most everyone around him was American Indian. Here he was exposed to very different cultures, beliefs, value systems and lifestyles, and some of them stood in direct conflict with his experience. So there were major adjustments he had to deal with upon coming to Southern Area.

Being Lumbee on the campus was a source of pride for Paul. While he agrees the small number of American Indians on the campus was disappointing, he used this to motivate him to succeed. It was important that those few students thrived and survived to degree completion. He was very self-aware and understood that not many American Indian students

had been admitted to or completed their degrees at Southern Area. Paul determined early on he would graduate with above a 3.0 grade point average, and he met this goal. After graduation, Paul went on to law school where he just started his second year. It is his hope to reside in the area where he attended undergrad and practice law.

Sage

Sage was one of the most energetic students with whom I spoke. She recollects her time at Southern Area University as a very positive one overall, despite some obstacles along the way. She came to her decision to attend Southern Area because she “had always been a Tiger Fan.” Southern Area blood ran deep in her veins although she had two brothers who attended a rival university of Southern Area. She describes her family as being split on their loyalty to Southern Area University and State University.

When she first arrived at Southern Area, she was a bit overwhelmed by the difference in the landscape in terms of the buildings and the hustle and bustle of what is considered by many to be a small college town. It was interesting that she kept coming back to discussions about the landscape. She noted how the green, plush landscape reminded her of home as she recalled memories of her grandmother who took pride in her own yard and gardening.

Sage is deeply connected to her tribe and her community. Currently, she plays a vital leadership role in her tribal community. Being Lumbee is a source of pride for her, and she lived out this pride while at Southern Area as an undergraduate. She was involved in various organizations such as the Native Student Organization (NSO) and her sorority, which promoted American Indian issues across the campus. Sage also held vital leadership roles within each group as well.

Sage attributes much of the strength to survive on the campus of Southern Area to being Lumbee. That strength relates to the survival of her tribe and her Christian faith which is practiced among many in her family and community. She notes she is an “overcomer because that’s just what Lumbees do. . . .It’s the Lumbee way.” She recounts times when she was the only American Indian in a class or she served as the “token Indian” to speak about Native issues in her lecture class. While “aggravated” at times by this responsibility, she was not “devastated,” as it allowed her the opportunity to educate others about who she is. Approached with some ambivalence, she used these moments to educate as opposed to retaliate against the recurring questions about American Indians.

Sarah

Graduating from Southern Area University is one of the major accomplishments of Sarah’s life. The oldest of six children, she was the first in her family to go away to college. Like many of the participants in this study, she grew up as a Southern Area fan and fondly remembers watching basketball games with her family, knowing that she wanted to go to college there one day. She recalls her mom urging her to pursue higher education because she was not afforded the opportunity. Additionally, Sarah’s cousin graduated from medical school at SAU, and she served as a role model to encourage Sarah to pursue her dreams. Sarah knew it was possible for her to complete her education because her cousin had paved the way. She acknowledges her family as an integral part of her education journey because they played a pivotal role in her success. They motivated, encouraged and supported, and in return, Sarah understands her place in serving as a role model for her younger siblings, many of whom want to follow in her exact footsteps.

Sarah described her “I’m not in Dogwood County anymore” moment when she arrived on campus. She made her first “real” visit as she pulled up to campus prior to the fall semester to attend the Southern Exposure summer program. The program would serve as a bridge to the fall semester and help her acclimate to the campus. Sarah noted that she desperately needed the program, but she cried all the way to campus as she left home. Immediately Sarah thought to herself, “Where are the corn fields and tractors on the roads?” and, “This place is huge.” The deluge of emotions from the unfamiliar was subsided when she learned of several Lumbees who were employed by SAU. Sarah was relieved to have that connection because she knew they would understand what she was experiencing because they knew where she “came from.” During her summer stay she made a connection with the American Indian Support Center where she would visit regularly and could “be herself and talk the way she wanted.” In this sea of tall buildings and bustling streets she had a small place she could call her own and feel at ease, “at home.”

Meeting new people and getting involved in organizations like the NSO and her sorority are things Sarah remembered as going very well for her. She enjoyed meeting new people both within and outside of the Native community. In fact, her roommate during the Southern Exposure program was non-Native, but they quickly found their “southern” ground which connected them. Her biggest struggle was overcoming her admitted shyness and tendency to be more reserved. In classrooms that encouraged self-directed learning through interactive class discussions and participation, she often found it a struggle to fully engage while overcoming her nervousness. It was difficult, even during her senior year, to find a

comfort zone in front of a class when she needed to do a presentation or lead a group discussion. While it became easier over time, it never became her favorite thing to do.

One of the questions participants were asked to respond to related to the adage sometimes heard in Indian Country that American Indians have to “walk in two worlds.” Sarah’s response to this question was interesting as she referenced talking with one group of students a certain way and then speaking in a different manner with another group or in the classroom. She recognized her difference from others, but in Sarah’s case, she would embrace some of these moments because she used them to educate others and explain who she was. Oftentimes she found humor in them as she discussed them with friends who were of a different culture or geographic location from Dogwood County. She went on to discuss how she had to overcome “writing like she talks,” which is something that caught her off guard initially as it had never been pointed out previously.

Overcome is what Sarah went on to do. She successfully completed her undergraduate degree and is currently working on pre-requisite courses to become a nurse and eventually a nurse practitioner. Recently engaged, she knows that she will one day want to start her own family and having an advanced degree will allow her to provide for her family.

Thomas

While Thomas was not born in Dogwood County, it is where he spent the majority of his life. His parents moved back when he was three years old, so Dogwood County is where he calls home. Many of his family members reside in the county as well. He attended the public school system there until he decided to attend a residential high school away from

home for his junior and senior years. Although he had spent these two years away from his home, he still desired to stay within the state to remain in close proximity to his hometown and community. Southern Area was the perfect fit as it was nearby and also well known as a prestigious public university which provided an excellent education for the cost.

I recall a very poignant moment from my time with Thomas when he reflected on settling into his residence hall on move-in day. Thomas's dad informed the roommate's family they were from Dogwood County, and the roommate's dad commented about their being "nothing there in Dogwood county." Thomas gave his roommate's dad the benefit of the doubt, but he also became keenly aware that difference existed and communication with others may stand in stark contrast to the ways he had been taught. For his roommate's dad to respond in such a disparaging manner during a first encounter was foreign to Thomas.

Transitioning to and through Southern Area University was about balance for Thomas. He discussed finding balance between being part of the Native community and that of the majority and other minority communities on campus. He had to find balance between juggling his academics and extracurricular activities and campus involvement. Thomas benefited by walking in the Native world through his association with groups like the NSO and his fraternity. At the same time, he enjoyed the "other world" of majority and other cultures. He often used this opportunity to help others learn more about American Indians and who he was as a Native person. Thomas suggested his foothold in the Native world provided the strength he needed to share his story of Lumbee identity.

Thomas completed his undergraduate studies at Southern Area and continued on to pursue a degree in one of the professional school programs. He has since completed his

advanced degree at SAU and is completing professional training in another state. Though he has achieved a great accomplishment, he notes he always felt he was in a position of trying to catch up to stay ahead when compared to many of his counterparts who were not from Dogwood County. However, he was successful in his efforts and has a great future ahead of him.

Tiffany

Tiffany comes to Southern Area University from Dogwood County like most of the participants of this study. She lived there all of her life until she moved to the area to attend college. Since that time she has completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees and resides in the area. She is employed by Southern Area and conducts research associated with one of the professional schools on campus.

Tiffany made the decision to come to Southern Area because she had lived in Dogwood County all of her life, and she had no desire to go to the local college or remain close to home. She wanted a different experience, and after attending several recruitment events at SAU, she knew this was the place she wanted to attend. She knew the rigor of SAU would give her the challenge she desired. Being accepted to SAU was something for which she was very proud, as she felt a “different caliber” of student is typically accepted to attend. She brought a strong work ethic as a “third generation” college student. Having parents and a sister that had attended college, she had lots of support and understanding of the journey, yet this did not diminish the pressure she felt to do well and not disappoint her family.

Tiffany knew there were other Native students on campus, and in order to get to know them and develop a community, she got involved with the NSO. She credits NSO for

helping provide a home away from home and make her feel comfortable on campus. She quickly realized she would be part of the “smallest ethnic group represented here on campus,” but it also allowed her to feel unique and “embrace and celebrate her individuality.”

Over time, Tiffany made a gradual move from activities associated with and for American Indian students. She felt as if Native students needed to be represented in other areas of campus life outside of the NSO. This allowed other people the opportunity to get to know more about American Indians and for her personally to be engaged more broadly on campus. This did not mean she desired to move away from her American Indian identity or roots. What it did mean is that she looked for opportunities to foster an increased awareness of American Indians where there otherwise may not have been.

Summary

This chapter provided a descriptive profile of each participant involved in this study. Each participant self-identifies as Lumbee and is originally from the same geographical area. Shared backgrounds and experiences are common, yet each participant has a story to tell. These profiles provide insight into these participants as individuals and as a group. As the findings of this research are discussed in the next chapter, the profiles will serve as a first lens for the stories each shares about their experience as a Lumbee student at Southern Area University.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Lumbee Indian students in higher education. This chapter focuses on the findings of the study that answer the research question: How can transculturation theory help us to understand and explain the experiences of Lumbee Indian students' successful college completion at a predominantly White higher education institution? Transculturation theory (Huffman, 2010) provides a lens through which to view the experience of Lumbee Indian students, and it guided the interview questions asked of the participants. The interview questions were grounded in the four phases of transculturation: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment and participation. However, the questions were open-ended to allow the participants space to delineate their experience transitioning through the university.

My original intent was to code the transcripts according to each of the phases of transculturation, using a set of a priori codes (Creswell, 2007). However, I decided against this approach as I found that I looked at the data to determine if a student had become transcultured or not as opposed to reviewing the data openly to determine what themes might emerge. For instance, I began thinking about whether the participants faced "initial alienation" when they arrived at the university, which is the first stage of transculturation by looking for experiences where they may have been made to feel separate or unlike the majority of the campus community. Instead, I reviewed the data openly to understand what the students experienced and how they experienced it as opposed to specific instances of alienation. My intent was to let the data speak for itself and then later make a determination

of whether or not transculturation had occurred and thus explained the experiences of the Lumbee participants in the study. I approached the data openly by bracketing (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) my knowledge of transculturation and using open coding to make sense of the transcripts. After the analyses, I developed a list of initial codes which were reduced to a set of analytic codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Three major themes as described in the following sections, emerged. Some of the major themes required sub-themes in order to provide additional context. In chapter 6 these themes are compared to the phases of transculturation theory to determine if the theory is useful in understanding the experiences of the Lumbee participants in this study.

The three major themes that emerged include the following: The Weight of it All; Who am I?; and Success is a Team Effort. Themes and their respective sub-themes are listed in Table 3. Each major theme and sub-theme is explored using the stories and experiences of the participants in my study.

Table 3

Major Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
The Weight of It All	Not Measuring Up Social Fit It's Our Responsibility
Who Am I?	A Reflection of My Community
	Worldview
Success Is a Team Effort	

The Weight of It All

The most prevalent stories of the participants conflated around the prodigious sense of responsibility the participants felt as they navigated the university environment. There was pressure to be a good student as well as a good representative of their home community. For example, as Sarah left home for college, her family encouraged her to do well in school so she could help her community. She noted, “I had that obligation to be a successful person at Southern Area and then come back to them and share my success and help them be successful.” Additionally, many of the students carried the weight of being the first in their families to go to college so they needed to “do well” and make their family members proud. These family members included immediate members, as well as extended family of the community such as members of the church they attended. The participants also felt obligated to be good ambassadors of American Indian culture by promoting awareness of Native issues, often serving as a first point of contact to inquisitive students from across the university. Because the responsibilities varied among the participants, it was necessary to separate this theme into three sub-themes: Not Measuring Up; Social Fit; and It’s our Responsibility. I will begin by explaining the participants’ desire to excel academically which was complicated by the rigor of the university and what they described as not being adequately prepared for the SAU experience. I refer to this as the experience of “not measuring up.”

Not measuring up. Arriving at Southern Area University (SAU) involved the immediate realization of difference by the Lumbee students. The landscape was dissimilar in various ways; seemingly disparate backgrounds of Native versus non-Native students made

the people seem different and the culture felt incongruent with what they had experienced in their hometowns. While there were many areas of difference, of note was a redirected sense of self-efficacy many of the students faced, in particular in the sciences. As Lisa noted, during her time at SAU, “We mostly majored in the same things. It didn’t vary too much, I don’t think. Psychology, sociology, exercise and sports science. I feel like our group, that was our majors.” They left their high schools with a strong sense of their academic abilities, but they quickly questioned the veracity of what their previous instructors in high school and their family members had told them about their academic aptitude. Because of the academic rigor, they began to wonder if they would be able to compete academically at the level they had experienced in high school. They still believed in their ability to be successful, but success would look different as they changed their majors and goals they initially had in mind.

Nathan noted he excelled back at home, and at Southern Area he experienced his first grade of F in one of his science classes. Although he struggled and changed his major along the way, he learned to measure his success by persevering and making it to graduation.

Nathan added:

Academically, I just learned to pick up the pace and go with it. I accepted that Cs didn’t mean I failed, it meant that I was a success. There were other Indians who applied here and didn’t get in that would have been happy if they got that C. I realized I came in at a disadvantage, and I had to work harder for that C than some of my classmates had to work for their As.

Not only did some of the participants feel that they were not prepared for the academic rigor of Southern Area, some felt they did not measure up to the academic proficiency of the students around them. They noted the lack of pre-college academic rigor necessary to compete at the same level as other SAU students. Lisa's account of her experience provides a similar narrative as Sage previously shared. Lisa discussed how she participated in pre-college programs while in high school and excelled. She believed in her academic skills as exhibited by her "I knew I could go to college" claim. She just needed to determine the right college location to put her abilities to use. Attending various visitation programs at Southern Area and realizing there were other Native students from her home community there solidified her decision to attend SAU. Lisa settled in quickly as she was part of a scholars program that provided an immediate community for her, but she acknowledged that she knew her academic preparation may have left her less prepared than her non-Native peers. She went on to say:

Well, back home I was top of my class, and used to making good grades, and being the top student, and never feeling like I was inferior. But then I came to Southern Area, and it was like, "Okay." That was a really big difference, because I was not at the top of my class, and there was no more coming in prepared, knowing everything. I felt really inadequate. And I can remember my first semester, one of my professors said to me, "You can't write papers like you talk." And that just really – I thought I would just cry there in class, 'cause I'm like, "What is she talking about?" And so that was a really big struggle 'cause I don't think I knew I wrote like I talk, which is country, and maybe a little slang. And so, it was really eye awakening, 'cause I never

had anybody tell me that in high school. I was fine. I was an excellent writer and gonna go places. And then I get here and it's like a slap in the face because at this point, it's kind of like maybe I'm not good enough. How'd I get in here? How am I gonna survive this?"

Lisa did go on to successfully graduate with her family's support and a strong belief in her ability to continue to be successful despite the obstacles she encountered. She attributed her success in part to "being resilient and pushing myself and believing that I could do it was something that was also really important." While her goals shifted and her major changed, her belief in her ability to persevere remained strong. However, during this process it was evident she sought to reconcile her past performance with her present experience at Southern Area. As did some of the other participants, Lisa questioned if someone had lied to her or if she had been given a false sense of hope regarding her academic abilities.

Alicia noted her awareness of difference in academic preparation came very early on in the SAU Southern Exposure program. Southern Exposure brings fully admitted students from rural areas of the state to campus during the summer before enrolling in the fall full time. This affords students the opportunity to experience the campus in a structured environment by taking two college-level courses for college credit. Students become more connected to the university campus and community by learning about various support services and resources. Alicia noted,

Thank God we had that program because it was a bridge from high school to college where I could kind of work my way in, but it was probably in that program where I was sitting in my chemistry class and, I remember it as clear as day, the professor was

just throwing out random questions about different chemistry things, and I was like, “I don’t know,” and these other students were just rattling off answers, like, “Yes, yes, yes,” and me and my other friends from home were just sitting there like, “What is going on?” Obviously, that’s kind of when I knew my hometown didn’t prepare us enough, and we just didn’t have the background that we needed.

Similarly, Elizabeth described a setting in which she felt she was set up for failure by not being provided adequate resources to succeed after coming from a high school that had underprepared her for the rigors ahead. She noted:

It was a disadvantage to a degree 'cause the community we had, and the support we had, was very small, and I feel like, especially Lumbees, most of them came from either the same high school or a high school that we knew about. We weren't prepared and we weren't on the same level as the other students, and I felt like the university didn't really give us the support that we needed to be able to compete on the same level as the rest of the student body. And another thing is, they knew that the high schools we came from weren't the same- up to par-and they knew these kids were not gonna be on the same level as a kid who came from East Smith Town High, but I was still in the same classroom as them, and I was still expected to compete on the same level. And it was kind of like a slap in the face in a sense a little bit because it's like, "Hey, here's this great opportunity, but here, you're gonna struggle the whole time you're here," basically, kind of mentality.

It was evident this was a difficult realization for Elizabeth, as she went on to share how this was part of her narrative in an essay for graduate school. She recounted this story

for me and its poignancy reflects the feelings of many participants in this study. She talked about the social, psychological and academic struggles she encountered:

[Academic and personal struggles] had their own separate challenges. Academic-wise, that was, "whew." I'm trying to remember the quote I told my mom, and I remember writing about it in a medical school essay thing I was writing about how I felt like I was in a race and I had bricks tied to my feet and I was trying to run and compete with everybody else.

I then made it a point to clarify that Elizabeth was talking about her academic struggles, and she nodded her head and said:

Yeah, yeah. And I remember having feelings of like, "I don't belong here. Why did they let me in this place?" And it wasn't just me; it was other native people as well. And other people of other races too, but especially us, I felt like we had no idea, like no idea. And that was hard in itself, I guess, and there came times when that stress outweighed any other social stress that you could, you know, and it was nice knowing they were going through the same thing, but it still didn't make it any better.

Elizabeth, like many of the participants in this study, reflected the theme of not measuring up as she began to examine herself in terms of fit with the university. She questioned, "Why did they let me into this place?" Over and over the students shared reflections about how they were once successful, but in this environment they were not having the same academic experience. For many of the students, this was something that was hard to reconcile, and some questioned the validity of the system that had left them underprepared for their Southern Area experience.

Thomas provides an interesting account of his experience within his science classes. He was one of the few participants in this study who stayed the course with his original plan to pursue a major in the sciences. However, this presented challenges for him. Thomas was the first student to talk about the classroom experience in terms of the lack of Lumbee students enrolled, in addition to discussing the rigor of the science major. Thomas recalled, “And that's why I feel like the academic support was -- it was good, but I kind of needed someone that knew like where I was coming from to give me some -- oh, these are usually your challenges that students from Dogwood County kind of face and this is what you should do to seek help.”

Thomas indicated when he encountered difficulty in class, he did not have any other Lumbee students he could call on for help. This reflects the sentiment that the Lumbee students did not measure up academically when it came to the science courses at SAU because they were not enrolled in the courses. Thomas noted in one of his science classes there was “probably me, one other African American student and then like 200 white students.” When he looked around other Natives were “missing” from the classroom and he wondered where they were. He pondered why this was and felt that as a cohort, this spoke to the Lumbees’ academic preparation as a group. This also led to another realization for Thomas.

Being in this community in the sciences, Thomas realized there was a system he referred to as “networking” which would help him succeed. Part of surviving in college, according to Thomas, was learning how to “work the college system” which was not prevalent among his Native friends. This system consisted of knowledge such as “which

teachers to take or you should go to this opportunity if you want to do this, or get a good recommendation or whatever you wanted to do.”

Transitioning to Southern Area University from the Lumbee communities in Dogwood and Azalea counties proved to be quite taxing for the participants of this study. While they were excited to be a part of this new community, they acknowledged they were quickly met with the unfamiliar and the academic challenges they faced were enormous. They went on to meet these challenges but it was not an easy task.

Summary: Not measuring up. As the participants tried to discern their academic fit, it was apparent they also felt the weight of another issue. The university would require them to consider their identity framed in a minority context that they were often unfamiliar with in Dogwood and Azalea counties. They would encounter efforts aimed at supporting their transition and academic experience, but finding their fit within them was sometimes eye opening. When discussing various communities on campus such as the majority community or the minority community, Thomas noted that at times he felt “the university did not always know what to do with us.” For some of the participants, they would add to their experience the weight of finding their social fit as well which is described in the next section.

Social fit. These stories of inadequacy and not feeling as if they measured up to the academic demands of the university also provided insight into the students’ social fit within the university and their sense of belonging. Many reflected on their fit by asking, “Do I belong here?” and thinking, “Maybe I should not be here.”

Sarah tried to understand her fit within the university and recalled a time when she had to complete a questionnaire in one of her classes. She noted:

And then being a minority within a minority was a different experience for me because when you – I remember one time in class we had to do a survey, and there's always the race question, or "What is your race?" I'm going down the list and I see Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Latino, African American, other, and it's like, "Where do I fit in? Do I click 'other'?" And so marking "other" – it was like, "Oh, I feel so left out. How do you go about – do we state this problem that's going on? Does this need to be addressed?" Just being recognized as almost nonexistent in a way, like, "We don't recognize you as far as this code," I feel like that was very different, that other minorities didn't really experience that part of being such a unique, little group of people on campus.

Lisa shared a poignant tale she discussed the minority experience on campus. She equated social fit with being "invisible" on campus:

We were a small group of students. And I felt like sometimes we were the invisible minority, and I felt like a lot of things were Black, White, Asian, that was it. And so I felt like sometimes coming to the university, there wasn't things really tailored, at that time, for us to really take part in. All the events that I saw that were for minority students and designed to really build community I felt like were more toward African American student groups. And so, even the pre orientation that we had before you come to Southern Area for orientation, I went to that, and I might have stayed maybe 15 minutes, because I just didn't feel like I fit in with that crowd. And so I felt like there were times like the university did a good job of trying to pad things for minority students, to help minority students. Then we, as American Indians, were the minority

among the minority, and so sometimes just felt like I was the only one walking across campus, because there were so few of us.

Caroline had to process the claims of “minority” status as the reason she was admitted to Southern Area. Upon her acceptance, there were individuals in her high school who would state, “You got into Southern Area because you are a minority.” Caroline was taken aback by such statements, as this was the first time she was confronted with the issue of her race in this manner. Arriving at Southern Area, she began to observe how the student body was divided along the lines of the White community and the minority community. Challenging at first, she learned to navigate them both as she defined for herself how she wanted to be viewed. Caroline went on to say, “Just because I’m this race doesn’t mean I have to fit into White or Black situations. I can be who I am. I can fit in just as well over here as I can over here.”

Thomas noted the difficulty he would sometimes have as he navigated his friend groups on campus while finding his fit. He made distinctions between his White friends and then “minority” friends. He went on to say,

If you were with Caucasian friends, you were the minority friend in the group. You were not necessarily Native American, but just most of the time people didn't know what you were. So then when you were with like African American or Hispanic you still didn't kind of. . . . You were still just a different minority. You didn't really know where you fit into the equation. So I think on one term you fit in with a lot of different people. And more easy just because people didn't really know how to, if you were Native American, they don't know where to put you in the hierarchal thing

of the cultures or races or whatever. So I think it was kind of difficult to find my place.

The students sharing these tales quickly evaluated how the university and others would view them as students. Sarah struggled to figure out where she fit into this system of race, and she questioned her validity in the eyes of the university if the institution did not value her enough to provide a space for identification on a requisite form. Lisa was challenged because she came from a place where she did not have to think about her race or explain it. Now she was thrust into the minority community which presented a new way of thinking about her identity in the context of Southern Area and the world. Similarly, Caroline and Thomas questioned their fit on campus at Southern Area. It was evident they had not approached their identity through this framework.

Summary: Social fit. The initial transition to Southern Area University presented challenges to the Lumbee participants of this study which they had not anticipated and were not prepared for in advance. They often struggled under the weight of feeling academically unprepared and inadequate. Additionally, they found it to be challenging to find their fit as a social group on the campus as they began to examine their identity in relation to being viewed as a minority. Amid these academic struggles, the students also dealt with differences outside the classroom which are examined in the next sub-theme. The accounts of Sarah, Lisa, Caroline and Thomas regarding their social fit provide a transition from the theme “The Weight of It All.” Questions about what it was like to be American Indian along with struggling to find their fit as Lumbees on the campus brought about another realization. If the campus was going to become cognizant of Indians in general and Lumbees

specifically, the students must be a part of that educational process. This is discussed in the next section on the sub-theme “It’s Our Responsibility.”

It’s our responsibility. Settling into the campus community came with another responsibility in addition to academic requirements. This was precipitated in part by the participants being involved in educating the campus community about American Indians. The participants discussed how they were met with questions about what it was like to be American Indian, or they were asked to discuss the history of Lumbees. Having to do this level of explanation was completely foreign to most, if not all, of the students I interviewed. Because they lived their culture in the safety of Dogwood or Azalea County, they “never had to explain it before.” This task simultaneously became quite taxing and rewarding. This education would be provided by the Lumbee students themselves, in addition to offerings of American Indian studies classes or special programs on campus. As a result, the participants faced another expectation: learning more about themselves and Native culture. This was an added responsibility that extended beyond just learning about yourself as your identity develops throughout the college experience. This meant the Lumbee students had to become more proficient in their knowledge of Indian Life 101 and what it personally meant to be Lumbee. For some students like Caroline, she felt the need to take American Indian studies classes in order to “have more of an understanding of things that I didn’t think about before.”

Lisa talked about how she was the “token Indian” because she had to advocate for American Indian issues. At the same time, it was through this advocacy she also developed a deeper sense of who she was as an American Indian. Lisa went on to say:

I felt like sometimes I became the spokesperson for, not only the Lumbee tribe, but all Native Americans across the US. *[Laughter]* And so I felt like that. I'd never had to do that before. And so, at that time, coming in, people were expecting me to know stuff, and I just felt so incompetent, like, "Why don't I know as much history about my people as I should?" Because here comes all these people asking questions about things that they think I should just be able to spill out, where if I turned that question around on them, I doubt they'd be able to answer those questions. And so, sometimes I felt like, "Okay. I need to go home, and I need to go get my books out, or I need to go look online, and I need to figure out answers to these questions, because I don't want to look like the minority student who don't know anything about her culture – the Lumbee student who don't know anything about her people." So I felt like that really forced me to learn more than maybe I had back home, because I was in a comfort zone, there, and didn't have to learn that. And so, in a way, that made me feel good, because I felt like I was an advocate, and I was educating people about the Lumbee tribe. And I felt like, "Okay. Nobody in this classroom knows. It's up to me to educate them where hopefully, for the rest of their life, they'll be able to say, 'Oh, yeah. I know about the Lumbee people.' And so, I would say, in that way, that was probably an advantage because I think that might have been my start to the world of social work that I'm in now, because it was very early on in college, where I became an advocate in a way that I didn't even know I was then. But I look back on it, and yeah, I'll say, "That's where my – that's where I began to advocate, right

there. And that's where I began to have a voice for people who weren't being heard."

So I would definitely say that was an advantage.

This proved to be an advantage for Lisa because as she reflected back to this time, she attributes some of it to helping her find her passion for her profession where she advocates for those who often times have no voice.

Admittedly it was a struggle at first to find her Native voice because she had "never even thought about that" in Dogwood because at home "we know who we are, and we didn't get that question, who are you, and what are you, those kinds of things." But she did empower herself by taking classes and getting involved with Native initiatives on campus. As a result she became an advocate on campus and is an advocate in her professional field.

Jordyn shared a similar account regarding the questions she had to entertain about her identity. Like many of the students, this was a first for her because she never had to do this at home. She noted:

I always knew that I was Lumbee before I came to college. I did not know what it actually meant to be an American Indian student until I got here. Because I was always being asked, "What are you? Who are you? And what's your history?" So not only did I have to teach them who I was, I had to teach myself first. And I didn't just have to learn about me, I had to learn about all the American Indians on campus 'cause there was a lot, you know, from other tribes. You may be asked, "Well are there more tribes in the state?" 'Cause then you'd have to say, "Well, yeah, there's these tribes and there's these organizations" and- and I think it was like this for a lot of my friends, we were always that spokesperson for Indian students on campus.

Like Lisa and Jordyn, many of the students experienced their own journey of self-discovery as they sought the answers to what it really meant to be an American Indian on the campus of SAU. Growing into this identity was not always easy, but some students did find it to be an enjoyable experience once they had a better understanding of who they were. As Matthew noted, “Just sitting in a class sometimes, you’re probably one of the only native people they’ve ever met in their life, so just being able to share your experience and what you went through was very important.” Matthew would go on to take pride in this and join initiatives on campus to create awareness of American Indian issues.

As these Lumbee students settled into campus, they became increasingly aware that some of their non-Native classmates and perhaps newfound friends had an inaccurate understanding of Native life that often relegated Indians to the past. It became important to all of the participants, to varying degrees, to make sure the campus community knew American Indians were present and thriving. The Lumbee students would go on to say how they were met with the response, “I thought Indians were dead,” when non-Indian students realized they were in their company. Consequently, much of their campus involvement focused on activities to increase campus awareness and knowledge of American Indian issues utilizing their student organizations as the vehicle to accomplish this task.

Clifford discussed the role of the American Indian fraternity to “educate the campus about who we were and what we were representing.” Through the promotion of cultural shows, they educated the campus about “what it means to be Indian” and more importantly to make the campus aware that American Indians were not “extinct.” While daunting and sometimes solitary, the students found the frequently-assumed role to be rewarding at times.

Their organizations were small, and they valued their contributions within these specialized groups. They were united in this effort and felt it was worthwhile to assume these duties because they were the few insiders who could. Paul explained:

Many people here have never seen a Native American before. That was one of the challenges we had to get over. And that took some time to get used to. Because all of these people still had this stereotype at least that we lived in teepees. We had straight long black hair, and things like that. I was just proud to be a Native American here because not many people knew we still existed. And I just wanted to let people know that we are still here.

Becky made note of how the Native community on campus was often “stretched thin” due to the demands for them to be represented across campus. While she talked about it as a source of pride, she did so with an exhausting tone. She was aware of their small numbers, but it was also an opportunity for the university to impact this dismal reality. She noted,

I felt like even the population here at Southern Area is picked out to represent certain things. They always want a Native American on the brochures or on the folder. And so you need to come to a photo shoot or you need to do this, but like I said we're small in numbers and so sometimes we were stretched thin, because we didn't have enough people here to do all the things that they wanted us to do. So there was a demand for us, but there was not a supply of us to do all the things.

Caroline noted this shortage as well and the responsibility she felt as she talked about how she settled into the campus. She said:

I think I definitely was comfortable much more socially than I ever became academically, because I felt this sense of obligation when I did get involved with the Native American community, making sure I flourished, making sure I could contribute, making sure I made things work the way it worked before. Because of such a small number, it put much more weight on you, because there wasn't anyone else you can delegate this to. Or, having all these other people who are running for positions and different things like that. So, for me, it was a lot for me to become comfortable academically. I think my junior year is when I became comfortable.

The early years at SAU proved to be taxing for Caroline, and she admitted it affected her academically. While she adjusted to the rigor of the institution, she did so while being heavily involved in the Native student organizations on campus. There was a great sense of obligation to be involved and also be an active participant. Caroline, like many others, felt a responsibility to herself to join these efforts to take up the mantle of leadership.

As a past president of the Native Student Organization on campus, Jordyn shared her experience of being the “only one” and the “voice” of the organization often. While she grew into this role, it was not always the easiest journey. Jordyn notes,

But getting to Southern Area and getting in leadership roles and then learning how to speak and when to speak and what to say, was a big learning experience for me. And I had no other choice but to do that because everybody was coming to me at one point in time, especially when I was NSO president to be the American Indian voice. And so what I said mattered. And what I said affected how the campus and other people

around campus saw American Indian students. And sometimes I knew I was the only voice being NSO president for American Indian students.

Greek Life was another area on campus where the students were involved in educating the campus community about their issues and creating awareness. On campus there is an American Indian sorority and fraternity that provided another avenue for the students' cultural expression. Clifford recalled his Greek life experience. Small in membership, Clifford played a vital role in the life of the organization. He noted,

So when me and Thomas pledged, it was like we were holding up the fraternity. So it was our responsibility to not only be a member but to make everybody else aware of us being a member. I would probably say that was my marker for becoming more involved with the campus, the fraternity, because we had certain – when it comes to the Greek Affairs Council, which was the Greek Council that our fraternity was under at SAU, we had some requirements that we had to fulfill in order to stay on campus and to stay recognized. We had to put on so many culture shows or so many performances per semester to educate – the point was to educate the campus about who we were and what it was we were representing. So that gave me ample time and opportunities to become more involved.

Elizabeth recalls her time in her sorority as important because of the role it played in increasing awareness of American Indians on the campus. She noted,

Yeah, I feel like me wanting to be a part of the sorority was another way for me to showcase my voice and to educate others and to say look, “We’re alive. We’re here. This is our culture. This is us.” And I felt like SAU really needed that because there

were just people, like we have some of the most educated people in the country but there's still things the student body didn't know about--that Native Americans still existed and stuff like that.

These stories painted a picture of a student group deeply committed and involved on campus. They understood the importance of keeping their organizations going because they served as a major resource to the campus. Becky summarized this best when she said,

So to a point, to an extent I feel like we were limited, but it's a give or take. And I feel like there are some people that did step outside of the boundaries. And they joined fraternity and sororities that weren't American Indian. And they did play a part in organizations that are not American Indian. But for the most part, I find that most of us stay restricted to these areas and we don't become deeply involved in outside organizations, which is a disadvantage, but the problem is that we don't have enough people to do that. We have to be deeply involved with what we have, and if we're not, then we won't have anything.

What I began to take away was the extremely heavy expectation the campus, and perhaps the students, had to be good stewards of their culture. While trying to excel in the classroom, they were trying to uphold all things American Indian. Becky noted, "Being an American Indian on this campus to me is hard, because you're the token person all the time in every class. And on every committee and in every group you're the go-to person for information about your group." It was important for them to tell their story accurately and seek to undo some of the understandings others had of them. This weight and responsibility they felt was exacerbated by the limited number of American Indian students on the campus.

Their capacity to affect the kinds of change they wanted was sometimes hindered by the amount of resources they had to call upon in regard to human resources. This need was expressed by Matthew. I was impressed by his keen sense of awareness of this issue and how it actually shaped his journey at SAU as an undergrad. He was very involved with campus life through organizations such as the Native Student Organization and his fraternity. The paucity of Native students on campus also moved him to become involved with the Diversity Affairs Office. While in this role, he worked to ensure the pipeline of Native students to SAU was strengthened. Matthew noted:

There are very few of us here, so you know I was proud that I actually made it here and got in. And that was a huge accomplishment for me, because – well, prior to my year, there was probably two or three students that came to Southern Area maybe if that many every year, so just being able to be here was huge for me. But once I was here and I started really thinking about me being here, and then realizing why aren't there more people here – why shouldn't – why – there were people that may have had better grades than me or people who could have been here and could have done well. “Why aren't they here? Why couldn't they have gotten in?” And then you start thinking about, “well, what about the students next year? I don't wanna be one of the five guys from home here that's – out of thousands of students.” So I kind of took it upon myself – I just kind of felt like it was my responsibility to kind of help other students that wanted to get in, get in, and then I started working with the Diversity Affairs Office and their recruitment programs and just – trying to figure out why students couldn't get in and try to expose students to SAU, and try to help them work

with students, and – that’s what it kind of meant for me to be here, was that, yes, I was here, but me being here hopefully could pave the way for other people to be here. For some of the students, this level of involvement affected their academics and they needed to reign in their participation. This was a difficult decision because they were needed in the efforts of the Native community outside the classroom.

James started out strong by being involved with these organizations but later realized that his level of involvement and leadership may have been detrimental to some degree. He noted:

So I felt like my leadership kind of just, like, went down because I just feel like I needed a refocus. I think I had been so involved that it took away maybe from my schoolwork or something. So I needed to refocus and definitely by my, like, senior year, too. I kind of like not put them aside, but didn’t make them my big priority I guess. And kind of like focus on my work, focus on my – continue learning about my own self and stuff.

James acknowledged his level of involvement waned when he began to realize his academics needed more attention. With some degree of hesitation, he decided to let some activities go, and his participation in Native activities dwindled. He managed to stay connected but was unable to be as involved as he would have liked.

Summary: It’s our responsibility. As a whole, the students recollected their time at SAU as a positive experience. They quickly realized that educating the campus about their backgrounds would involve the Lumbees’ becoming more knowledgeable about their own historical context. Subsequently, many of the students had to delve into various areas of

research to understand their identity as Native people in ways that they had never encountered. As the interviews continued, it was clear the students did understand who they were as Lumbees in the context of their community. They were able to define who they were in various ways as they talked about how they saw things at SAU versus other individuals and groups. These stories are shared in the next section, reflecting the second theme, “Who am I?”

Who am I?

After hearing these stories of the students’ experiences at the university, I found myself going back to a statement many of them made when they were faced with the incessant questions about their Indianness. Oftentimes they indicated they had “never thought about it” when they had to consider what it meant to be Lumbee. The data illustrated they knew who they were, but they had not considered their identity in the context of the larger society. This is part of the natural progression of identity development for college students (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998), and arguably the college years are some of the most crucial to this development. As Lisa noted during her interview, “Part of coming to college is learning who you are, and really just becoming more aware about yourself.”

Part of their awareness came with a deeper understanding of the community they came from. Some spoke to the high schools that had prepared them which they began to view to a degree as being underprepared when they were faced with the academic demands of Southern Area. Attaining a college degree for another participant deepened his sense of community responsibility, and for other students, their identity would be defined by the community they represented. It is within these stories that the participants provided a

window into their identity and its connection to Dogwood and Azalea counties. The communities and families the students represented were an integral part of their definition of what it meant to be Lumbee. They pursued their educational journeys with their community in mind. This is discussed first in the sub-theme, “A Reflection of My Community.”

A reflection of my community. As the interviews progressed, some of the students’ stories made a connection to their homeland of Dogwood and Azalea counties and pointed to their feeling academically inadequate. As they talked about what I would later term as “not measuring up,” they moved seamlessly between discussing being Lumbee and being from the Dogwood area. Even if I asked about what it meant to be Lumbee on the campus, they would reference, “Well, coming from Dogwood County,” or “Growing up in Dogwood” as part of their identity as Lumbees.

Sage offered a telling account of the incongruence of her academic preparation with the academic expectations of the university. High expectations, coupled with her encounters with students she perceived to be far more advanced, resulted in her questioning her fit at Southern Area. She equated her experience to one of fighting to “catch up” to everyone around her. It was during her discussion of advantages and disadvantages of being Lumbee that she shared her story:

I think it hindered my college experience in a way because I didn’t have the resources that other students had coming from other places, that were maybe part of Dogwood County or not, part of Lumbee land. We didn’t have those resources, because we’re the poorest county in the state. We didn’t have 15 different AP classes or IB classes – I didn’t even know what that was, or I can’t remember the correct name for it. And

so, these students had these opportunities, so they were more aware of what was going on in the world, and they knew more in depth about certain subjects that I just hadn't had the opportunity to come across, because of the resources that Dogwood County public schools had.

Sage's account of her experience provides a similar narrative as Lisa previously had shared.

Sage equates her lack of adequate preparation to lack of resources within her school. Notably, she began to talk about the school as situated in Dogwood County although I had asked about any benefits or hindrances being Lumbee offered. Further conversations with other participants reflected this association with Lumbee and Dogwood County as well. The tales of inadequate academic preparation continued and some of the participants connected these tales back to "Lumbee Land." Clifford shared a similar concern regarding his academic preparation. When reflecting on advantages or disadvantages of being Lumbee at SAU, his conversation included thoughts about his academic preparedness and lack of resources in his home county. Clifford noted:

I think coming to Southern Area and then getting settled in these classes and stuff, it was – as far as the disadvantage, for a lot of the stuff, I wasn't – I don't think I was prepared for, like coming from my high school, from my small town. We didn't have as many resources compared to, let's say, a bigger city like Rockfort-like a different – we didn't have as many resources, as much money to go into our education. So I don't think I was like fully prepared for college as far as the work that had to be put into it. Being Lumbee, I think that was probably my biggest disadvantage.

Similar to Sage, Clifford's connection to his community of Dogwood County is part of his narrative. His story demonstrates the connection between being Lumbee and being from Dogwood County. Clifford situates his identity in the land of the Lumbee, and he is also cognizant of the socioeconomic status of the county in comparison to other locales. As he reflected on his time at Southern Area, he noted his journey was bigger than himself. Attaining his education was an education for his community. Clifford went on to share:

Coming to college too helped me realize that it's not just about – see, in the beginning, when I was thinking I wanted to better my people and to better myself, it was to better me and to better my immediate family. But see when I come to college, I come to college and I learned, and I actually learned about my people. And it's not just about me, and it's not just about my immediate family because when I reference my people now, it's all my people. It's all my Lumbee people, from Dogwood County.

The students did not talk about their identity as Lumbee and their home communities as separate things. In fact, they often switched between talking about being Lumbee and being from Dogwood County in a seamless manner, indicative of how they view their home location as being part of who they are. Being Lumbee and being from Dogwood are one in the same, as Lumbees view the area of Dogwood and Azalea counties as their homeland, a place that has been inhabited by Native peoples even before the term Lumbee was applied (Lowery, 2010).

This speaks to the students' confluence of identity with place. As they discuss not measuring up at SAU, they often referenced the region from which they came. Some may

argue that their feeling inadequate due to their academic preparation has to do with being from Dogwood and not being Lumbee. However, part of being Lumbee is being connected to Dogwood County, and in many ways the two are inextricably linked.

Consider Sage's account. Sage also provides a window into her understanding of the social stratification of the county as well. She recognizes the county as a whole is an economically poor county, but she reflects on being from other areas of the county, such as Lumbee Land, which lacks even more resources. She came from a predominantly American Indian high school that served mainly Lumbees so she understands that there is a socioeconomic factor that comes with being Lumbee from this area.

Alicia noted academic difficulties she experienced, but she credited her community for instilling within her the need to succeed. Her community, which she referenced as her "hometown" was more than just a town. This place was part of who she was. Alicia shared:

So, that's the main thing that I brought with me, that I needed to succeed. That's something my hometown just – that's how I was raised, that's how my family raised me, like I said, that's people in high school, my counselors, and my teachers, they told me that that was the number one thing, and that's the main thing that I brought from home.

Emily noted that connections to family and community are an inherent part of Native life, but especially among the Lumbee. She went on to say:

There will always be the strong sense of family and community that a lot of Native American students have, even coming from different tribes, but especially the Lumbee tribe. There's just a strong sense of family and community and loyalty to

your family and things like that that transpires into your experience up here and the family you kinda adopt up here. And that, I definitely would say, was probably the biggest difference between being Lumbee and being just "other."

At one point, the Lumbee were referred to as the Indians of [Dogwood] County (Lowery, 2010), reflecting their connection to the county and the land. Arguably ambiguous to the non-Lumbee or perhaps even other Natives not of the area, it is understood among Lumbee people that there is a difference in growing up Lumbee in Dogwood versus another county or urban area. Lisa captured it best when she said back home, "Who I was, was just a given, growing up in Dogwood County. People look like me. We're Lumbee. We just know that."

Summary: A reflection of my community. Reconciling their past academic performance and preparation with the demands of Southern Area was challenging and the participants struggled to find their academic fit. The participants faced the formidable task of adjusting to a new environment while trying to process why past methods of studying and preparing for assignments did not provide the same level of success as it had in the past. They questioned the validity of their high school education while underscoring the socioeconomic status of their home county to a degree. The Lumbee participants understood the lack of resources in their schools on a different level when they compared themselves to other students they believed were afforded more opportunities and possessed greater intellectual capital. These stories also revealed how closely connected they viewed their identity through the lens of Dogwood and Azalea counties as Lumbees.

The SAU students often commented about being so different from other students and the environment around them. It was this difference that made them begin to question or consider that their world had been shaped in a way, due to their culture, that often did not align with the world around them at Southern Area University. Caroline expressed her difficulty with not fitting the mold of what others thought they should in terms of their identity:

I feel like, yeah, you have to explain it a lot, you have to explain, why is it that you don't look the stereotypical image of what a Native American looks like, or, if you're in a huge sociology class and you're speaking from the Native perspective, people are like, "Oh, I'm surprised she has long brown hair." Or, when you're talking to someone, and saying, "I'm going to a powwow." And they're like, "Oh, are you dancing?" Then you think, "No, I don't dance." People expect this traditional person, and when you don't fit that traditional person, then it's kind of hard to – it's kind of difficult within your person to say, "Am I really Indian enough, or Lumbee enough?"

The data provided a glimpse of the worldview of the students as they navigated SAU. Participants said, "We just did things differently." Although SAU was only two hours away from their community, Lisa noted, "It still felt like a culture shock, to me. And I kept thinking I cannot believe this is only two hours away from home."

In the next section, I provide some context for this difference by examining the way the participants saw the world of SAU which reflects their orientation to Native life, specifically their Lumbee upbringing. First, I will discuss their worldview orientation and

then provide examples of some of the values and belief systems the students shared which provides a window into their success at SAU.

Worldview. During my interview time with the students, I asked them to compare and contrast their experiences and to reflect on differences and similarities for the purposes of understanding of how they saw and interpreted things at Southern Area University through their Native lens. I was seeking a deeper understanding of what their transition had been like and how they moved through the university to degree completion. These differences generated a range of emotions and feelings among the participants from excitement to fear and sometimes ambivalence as they integrated into campus life.

Alicia shared her realization that she was different from the other students she encountered. Her initial awareness at the Southern Exposure summer program was deepened during the course of her first year or so on campus. This realization went much deeper than just her outward appearance. The students talked about individuals or groups around them not knowing who or what they were, but other non-Natives knew the Lumbees were different. For Alicia, this difference was not something on the surface but visceral. She described it as follows:

It's hard to explain. It's not a sense of...a lot of people always associate it with, "Oh, you look different, what are you," but it wasn't that for me, it was more of an internal thing where I didn't relate with other people, and that's where I felt that it was different. I was always used to having a hundred friends in high school that I could relate to, every one – even though they were all different in a way, I could still relate. But when I got up here, it's different. I didn't know how to interact with other people.

I know it may sound weird, but that's how it is. I didn't know what we could talk about, because at home or in high school we were all in this niche, we were all in this community where we grew up together and we had all these memories and these experiences shared together, but when I got here, it's like, "What do I talk about, how do I become friends with people who I know nothing about," who know nothing about me, who know nothing about my heritage, who, some of them didn't know that Native Americans existed, who questioned "Are you really Native American?" It's hard to relate to people who think like that, who aren't the same as you, who didn't come from where you come from. Obviously, growing up in Dogwood County, I never – I mean, there are other races there, but it's a majority Native Americans, so growing up there, that's all I knew until I came to SAU and realized it's kind of a different world with different people.

Growing up in Dogwood County with Lumbees all around her shaped the way Alicia knew and navigated the world. One of those ways is a lack of diversity on the scale that the students found at SAU. As Alicia notes, there was little diversity in her high school where there are majority Lumbee students. This made it difficult for her at SAU because she felt she had nothing in common with other students around her. However, when she was among her Lumbee friends with shared experiences, she found it easy to communicate.

Paul talked about the importance of the American Indian Support Center as a place to congregate and hang out with other members of the Native community. He also quickly added, "Plus they would always feed us. That was a big thing." One of those ways that Lumbees relate, although it seems simple, is food (<http://www.southernfoodways.org/oral->

history/work-and-cook-and-eat-lumbee-indians-of-north-carolina/). Food is oftentimes synonymous with family and community. When I asked about being Lumbee on campus, Nathan remembered fondly those times of gathering with other Lumbees to cook and eat. Nathan went on to state,

And as far as being a Lumbee, we would get together and cook, just have food that nobody else understood. Everybody else....it's chicken and pastry.....no, it's chicken and paster and that's what we're gonna have. It's collards and cornbread, and that's what we're going to have. It's not greens – no, it's collards, cornbread, and fatback and that's what we're going to eat. It was being able to talk and feel comfortable speaking where nobody else understood what I was saying, but people from home – Sarah shared a humorous account of how the definition of a particular food item made for a memorable moment at SAU. She laughed and said,

People up here call *chicken and paster* “chicken and pastry,” or “chicken and dumplings,” and I’m like, “Chicken and– that ain’t no dumpling. That is *paster*. That’s chicken and *paster*,” talking to other people like that, and they’re just like – I remember one time getting in an argument with somebody about, “No, it’s chicken and dumplings.” “No, it’s chicken and *paster*. That is not a dumpling. You define what a dumpling is for me, then we can talk about this.” Just that language barrier called for good times all the time with other cultures on campus, and walking with that one foot in one world and one foot in the other world.

While this may have seemed like a simple difference in semantics, it is important to realize how Sarah is using it to describe the differences between her world and the world she

encountered. This is why she provides it as an example of “one foot in one world and one foot in the other world.” The world of Dogwood County and that of SAU are two different things which she had to figure out how to navigate. One thing that some may take for granted such as food is important to these students because of the power to connect by providing a relational foundation. The provision of food often involved gathering and coming together which reflected the community aspect of their way of life as many students said these were reminders of home.

Another example of the importance of food to their stories was Sage’s sharing of a photo of banana pudding she brought along to her interview. When she presented the photo, she talked about how Dean Jones’ wife had prepared the dessert for a gathering of the Native Student Organization (NSO). When Sage saw it, it “represented home.” She laughed as she talked about how she licked the serving spoon after everyone had ravished the pan. She noted, “So, the banana pudding was kind of like a little slice of home for me, and licking that bowl was me trying to get all of home that I can get. I feel like, I knew that this was how I was going to make it, especially after I tasted the banana pudding, I was like, yeah, I can survive here, because home is here, too.”

One of the ways Lumbees have validated who they are is through food. It is just as much a part of who we are as the land and our community (Wood, 2014). This explains why banana pudding represented home to Sage. It also explains why Sarah was so emphatic about the difference between *chicken and paster* and chicken and dumplings. Sarah was also careful to point out the difference in saying chicken and pastry versus *chicken and paster*. It is an identifier that speaks to who the Lumbee are. This example provides a window into the

world of the Lumbee student as it demonstrates that food speaks volumes about their connection to their homeland and to each other.

In contrast, some reflections on the differences the students experienced provided for not-so-humorous accounts. There were times of difficulty which lead to pondering how the world could be so different at Southern Area compared to their home. The students expected it to be different because it was beyond the confines of Dogwood and Azalea counties, but it was evident they did not anticipate the degree to which these differences would make them feel set apart at times. Lisa talks about how she observed differences in prioritization and how she felt she differed from everyone else as to why she came to Southern Area in the first place. She said:

I felt like everybody around me was focused on the partying and stuff, and me, I'm like, "Okay. I'm coming from this small community back home. I have to be successful. I cannot flunk out. I have to show people back home that I can come to Southern Area and graduate so that they can come here and do the same thing." But I feel like other people, that was not their focus. Their focus was partying and here to have a good time. And I just felt like, "I don't understand why they don't get it."

[Laughter] So, I guess I was more – again, that was another difference. But I never really felt like all these people relate to me, or these people understand me, or we're alike. I never had really meaningful experiences that were similar.

Lisa came to Southern Area to get an education for herself and for her community. She understood that others from her community were aware she was here and they were watching her. She was here to be an example for others in addition to being a student because she

represented someone who made it. She was Lumbee and proud to represent her community. Lisa was very aware that she had been granted the opportunity of a lifetime and it was not to be wasted as it seemed so many others around her were doing. This added responsibility to her community and her family may have felt weighty at times, but it also kept her grounded so that she stayed the course and graduated.

Matthew shared similar sentiments. He discussed how his culture as a Lumbee “influences everything” about him. It was through this lens that he saw the world. Like Lisa, he also began to question the priorities of others. Matthew shared,

So it was kinda weird to see how different – what really stuck out was what was really important to some people and what was important to you. To me, well, I’m here to get an education and that I’m one of 12 Lumbee kids that got in this year. I’ve got to do well for not myself, but for anyone else that’s Lumbee that wants to come [here].... And that’s definitely a huge difference, where people’s priorities are.

The data showed that the expectations of their community, which constitutes their family and their church and their schools, influenced their decision-making. The Lumbee students in this study exhibited attitudes toward obtaining a college education that often differed from that of majority culture they encountered. The data suggested that Lumbee students came to college with their communities. They had a responsibility to them and they had to accomplish this goal for themselves and home.

Faith is another integral part of the culture of Lumbees in Dogwood and Azalea counties (Dial & Eliades, 1996). Early historical accounts detail Lumbees practicing Christianity and a strong belief system in a higher power. It also shapes the way Lumbees

interpret the world around them. For Nathan, who was characterized as a deeply religious individual, the difference between his home and SAU was exemplified while exploring the campus. His faith was tested when the dissimilar worlds of Dogwood County and SAU collided. He spoke in a cathartic manner as he told the following story:

My first Friday night here, I cried, because I was with my friends on the street, and I saw this man sitting on one of the churches' steps, drinking. I called home crying and my grandma was like, "What's wrong with you?" I was like, "Ma-ma, this man is drinking on the church steps." So that was my first realization, I'm not home anymore, people aren't going to view the world the same way I do. So, that was the first time I realized that.

Nathan noted this is when he realized that the world of SAU was going to be vastly different than what he had known in Dogwood. He also shared another poignant moment when he was on a campus bus. This awareness had a huge impact as he told his story with some hesitation. Nathan explained:

Then, that following week I was on the bus, I was already stressed because of classes, because the homework was already starting to pile up. My Spanish class was already leaps and bounds ahead of where I should have been. I was on the bus one day, and I heard seven or eight different languages being spoken, and I had never heard those languages before. I heard English and Spanish. I couldn't even recognize what those languages were, and I was kind of ashamed, and I felt stupid because I hadn't been exposed to that, but that's one thing about Southern Area I love and appreciate, things I never would have been exposed to, good or bad, I was exposed to here.

I noted Nathan's body language as he shared these two stories. At one point, Nathan had tears in his eyes when he talked about his faith and how it had shaped his identity. He talked about his search for the right church where he could have a community of fellowship. As he discussed the homeless man he saw on the church steps it was very telling. Spiritual matters were just as important as academic matters according to Nathan, and at one point he changed roommates due to religious differences. In the end, Nathan could look back on his SAU experience with gratitude as they opened his mind because of the exposure he had outside of his home community. He added, "But that's one thing about Southern Area I love and appreciate, things I never would have been exposed to, good or bad, I was exposed to here."

It is important to note that although these differences existed, like Nathan, other students embraced this as an opportunity for learning. For Caroline, understanding her difference from others served as a source of pride, and she embraced this unique place she occupied in the fabric of the university. Being Lumbee on the campus offered an advantage. Caroline noted:

I don't think it was ever a disadvantage. It was always an advantage, but it's something I had to realize was an advantage. It is really difficult going into a place where nobody knows who you are, nobody can look at you and say, "This is what you are, this is what you identify as." And then, being a person where you're meeting all kinds of people who, "Oh my gosh, you're the first Native American person I've ever met." So it's like, "Wow, I'm so different." So, it is a good feeling – I always felt it was an advantage, because it helped me feel who I was, to accept who I was, and to

be a person who could take those experiences – being in an adverse situation as a minority person and go out into the real world and show people that just because I'm this race doesn't mean I have to fit into white or black situations. I can be who I am, I can fit in just as well over here as I can over here. So, for me, it was a great thing to come to Southern Area and be around so many different people, representing a small minority, because you're able to take all those advantages, get out into the real world and show people that you don't have to fit into these categories, you can be your own category.

Another area of difference for the students was how they navigated the campus as a community, reflecting the Lumbee worldview of supporting each other in personal and academic endeavors. Education is one of these endeavors because it improves the lives of those in the community. As the students experienced SAU, this mindset was not something that was often shared outside of the Native community on campus. Universities have historically promoted individual identity development, and while this happened for the participants in this study, they did so in conjunction with each other.

The idea of group success versus individual success was clearly articulated. Becky had an interesting perspective regarding competition within SAU. While she worked to be successful, it was not to the detriment of her Native community. She realized her hard work would benefit her community as she would also benefit from others who were completing their degrees. They were in this together for the benefit of the collective group and their beloved Dogwood and Azalea counties. She noted:

I sometimes felt like Southern Area is a competition. And where I'm from the community you help everybody. You help your family. And those around you and your neighbors and you do what you can for other people especially your family. And so I felt like sometimes Southern Area forced you to compete for things that weren't necessarily -- that didn't need to be competed for. Admission into certain programs or scholarships or getting on the dean's list or things that we competed for all the time against each other. And I don't think we always knowingly knew what we were doing. And it was sometimes a disadvantage to us because we didn't know what we were doing, but when somebody else got something that we thought we deserved, it caused rifts within our community. And we weren't used to competing so much within each other.

Lisa shared a similar story. Navigating the SAU campus as a family was not the norm for the majority of individuals on campus, but it was how the participants in this study survived. Many of the participants talked about how this was not common among friends outside of their Native circle. Lisa went on to explain:

I know some people don't have that when they come into college. It's more of a me, me, me idea, only worried about yourself. But I don't feel like that was the case with our group of Native students, because we wanted to see each other succeed, and increase the educated native people in the world. And so they definitely were a big part of that success. If I would have decided one day that I'm gonna drop out of Southern Area, not only would my mom kill me – and so that would deter me from that – but that group of students as well, those native students, I knew I would have

had to answer to them, too, and I would have had to have those tough conversations about why I was making that choice. And so, they were kinda like my family up here.

These Lumbee students moved in conjunction with each other. They were a unit that was held together by their commonality. They came from the same area and had a shared experience that they continued to share together as students at Southern Area. Matthew noted that when they struggled, they were often struggling with the same things. These struggles brought them together because, as he said, “When something kind of clicked for one, it clicked for everybody.” They were in this together and they would survive together. Thomas noted how his non-Native friends commented about his loyalty to others. It was just part of who he was. He went on to say that when someone in the Native community is struggling it is our culture to “haul up on each other,” to ask how they can help or inquire about your well-being. By this he meant you rally around each other for support because you believe in that individual while also understanding their success is your success as well.

This world of competition often left the students exhausted and overwhelmed. It even affected the community mentality they entered with at SAU. Elizabeth described it in this way:

Yeah, I feel like coming from home, like everybody has ambition to be this great thing, and "you need to go do this and come back and help your people," which I believe. I feel like I should give back to the community that trained me and raised me, but I feel like when I got here, it was just like you just survive, like you don't....you know...it's dog-eat-dog world and you just have to survive.

Summary: Worldview. Survive is what all of these participants went on to do which leads to the last of the findings in this study. There is an understanding of how they navigated the campus and what their experience was like. They have provided a window into the challenges they faced and we can understand the differences they experienced between SAU and their home communities. However, another important piece of this narrative is to understand how they did survive. This is explored in the next section. For the Lumbee students in this study, their survival was connected to their values and belief systems and their community of support.

Success is a Team Effort

The most important part of this study is to understand how these Lumbee students successfully navigated the campus of Southern Area University to degree completion. Much of the literature focusing on American Indians in higher education focuses on why the students do not matriculate to degree completion, and the intent of this research was to offer a different narrative of success framed by the stories of the students themselves.

Noted throughout the narratives of these students was the salient theme that community, both on campus and at home, was integral to this success. They navigated the campus as a community, they celebrated their successes and supported each other in their failures as a community, and they graduated as a community. The interviews concluded with the students reflecting on their graduation day and what that meant to them. Nathan shared a moving account of that day that captured what I believed to be the essence of what all the participants had to say:

I took off that cap and feather and I put it on my grandma, because my graduation from Southern Area was her graduation from Southern Area, my success was her success. I mean, almost all my family members have a picture in that regalia with that feather, because while they weren't physically here in the classroom, *they were here*. I'm humbled when I look at that, those pictures. Especially that feather. (Long Pause) Because, 200 years ago, or however old this institution is, nobody walked across the stage with a feather on their cap and gown. There were no Lumbees here. So, it means a lot to me. I still put that thing on sometimes. (*laughter*)

Many of the participants, if not all, adorned their graduation caps with a feather that is often presented to graduates who were past participants of the Native Student Organization or the fraternity or sorority. Some of the participants also brought the feathers in with them to our interview, and it was clear that the feather meant so many things. This usually included a representation of accomplishment, identity and community. For Nathan, over time, he found his place and he was deeply appreciative of the opportunity to have walked where others had walked before and even more so those who had wanted to but were not allowed. His success truly was not about him, it was much bigger than that.

The students attributed their success to the community of support around them which often focused on the American Indian Support Center; Dean Jones, who was connected to an academic support office on campus; American Indian faculty and staff; and non-Indian faculty and staff who understood them and met them where they were. Nathan also noted,

I think for Indian students, regardless of where we are at, if we have support and we feel that our family's backing us, we'll be successful. We may not graduate with

4.0s, and maybe on academic probation more than one time and have to appeal and all this stuff that I did – but as long as we have people to support us and to believe, not just say, “Oh, you can do it,” but also believe you can do it, we’ll be OK. And we can have more Lums graduating from SAU.

Sage had a powerful statement about the importance of the Native community and family on the campus of SAU. It was this “family” that she attributed to her success on campus. She noted,

And then, creating family through NSO and Native Student Singers and even feeling like your academic advisor or the American Indian Support Center was part of that family, whether it was a student-led event or a department-led event, they were always there, students and advisors, because we all wanted to see each other succeed and smile and have fun, because that was our home away from home, whether it was the Lumbee community or any other Native community, we were a Native family, and that’s kind of – when we had those events, I felt like afterwards, say, cultural week or the week of powwow, we always have a lot of Native focus events thatthat week makes me feel at home, and then after you leave those events you really feel kind of pleased, filled up, I would say – people might not know what it means, but you’re filled up with joy or peace, and you’re filled up because it’s kind of like food, you have enough energy to go out and conquer the world again, until the next event, where you have to refuel yourself with some more Native people and passions.

So many times the students talked about having a bad week or experiencing some difficulty, but when they got with their “people” on campus the world seemed right again. Their peers rallied around them for support and this gave them the energy to press on when they felt like giving up. Sage noted the campus powwow as a source of this strength. Lisa used the term “refueling” in a similar fashion as Sage talked about being “filled up.” Lisa noted that early on at SAU she went home often because it helped her maintain her identity. She did not want to go off to college and “forget” who she was, so she needed to keep that balance between her community at home and at SAU. Some of the ways she did this were returning home to attend her church in her community and becoming involved with the Native Student Organization. Lisa went on to say:

And so I feel like that balance of just making sure that I went home and hung out with family and went to church just refueled me, I guess, until the next time that I could get home. And in between that time, my refueling came from our meetings in Native Student Organization, our cookouts, and our dinners, and things like that that kept me going. I definitely think inside the community, the people that I was around, other people like me, other Lumbee people from home, they were encouraging. We wanted to see each other succeed. It wasn't, “I'm here to outdo you. I want to push you down, or I want to see you flunk out.” We were there to support each other. And when classes got hard, and we didn't get the grades that we wanted, we supported each other. If we needed to study together and we were taking some of the same classes, we did that. And we also – the community at Southern Area that I was involved in was really good about helping me with that self care piece where, “Okay.

It's time for me to back away a little bit from studying and academics and just relax and have some fun, and realize that it's okay to do that, as a student." And so, thank God for those student groups and that community that I had that – just a simple thing like going to Mel's on Harris Street and spending hours at dinner laughing and talking, was really good medicine for me.

It was this community support which helped Lisa achieve the balance she needed to be successful at Southern Area.

Lisa said the students collectively ensured "self-care" and they provided "good medicine" for each other. Good medicine implies this support touched her holistically and deeply as if to touch the soul and provide healing when needed (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Stein, 1992). Oftentimes in Indian Country, you will hear the term "good medicine" used in relation to events that are good for the mind, body and spirit such as a powwow. It was this "good medicine" that propelled many of the students through the university. Community kept the students grounded so that they could focus on their studies but one student, Thomas, discussed community as a double edge sword. Thomas noted,

I think a common -- or something I've heard.....is that my home community almost like held me back from fully integrated into the campus community, because they -- you're always hearing don't get -- don't change or don't get too comfortable with people up there, because they share X,Y or Z belief or whatever. And I was really maybe not unnecessarily, but I think a lot of times unnecessarily kind of caused me to maybe hold back and look at things with a little bit more question than I probably should have. But on the other hand, it kind of kept me grounded on a few different

things. I think that's why for me, personally, I didn't get caught up too much in the crazy party scene, like everybody seemed to be getting into. And I knew my parents and my community, my grandparents and everybody else said that once you get into college you're going to face these temptations. This is the consequences. And so I knew it kind of helped me stave off probably some of the negative things in my life. So I guess that's why I say it's a double edge sword. It kind of kept me grounded, but also prevented me from integrating fully into all that's happening on campus.

I wondered in what ways he felt held back due to his community influence, and one example was learning about other religions and beliefs knowing that he has a strong Christian upbringing. Over time he did gain an understanding of these beliefs as he realized it did not mean he had to let go of his own. Ultimately, Thomas attributed this community influence as the foundation for his success without losing his identity.

Community was the essence of everything the students did at SAU, including the completion of their degrees. They progressed together and they failed together, but no matter what, they supported each other in good and bad. Emily said the American Indian students served as an integral support system because “when I fell down they were always there to pick me back up. And had I not had this community I don’t think I could have made it.” This particular group of students were able to band together to replicate a structure that was familiar to the home communities from which they came, and it was integral to their success. When asked about settling in, Becky said that her involvement and her feeling at home solidified when she developed a community that “mirrored” her community back home. She

noted, “I had to meet other students and faculty and staff like me in order for me to feel comfortable and feel like there were similarities from back home.”

They noted how the American Indian Support Center played a role in their creation of community and in some ways served as a hub from which many of the other services emanated. Jordyn explained:

I had heard about the American Indian Support Center in tours that I had done, been introduced to it multiple times. And then I ended up getting a work-study position at the American Indian Support Center, and that was amazing. I loved working there. I loved the people I got to meet working there, because working through that position I made contacts with American Indian professors and professors in the American Indian studies department and people who supported American Indian studies and things like that. So I made a lot of contacts through working through there, and that also helped to broaden my community a little bit within the Southern Area community.

In addition to the value of the American Indian Support Center, all of the participants had in common an American Indian academic adviser who shared a similar background and who was familiar with the way the students viewed the world. The students suggested this adviser was integral in helping them bridge their understanding of their home communities with the university. Emily noted:

He welcomed us in. He held us – his door was always open. He was always there to help us. So any problems we had, we went to him. *[Laughter]* There were many times freshman year I would call him or text him or go by his office and be like,

"Dean Jones, I can't make it. I'm not" – you know? Dean Jones was always such a piece of back home, that we knew somebody who knew the life up here and knew the life back home and could somehow help us merge the two – Dean Jones was that stepping stone, the first stepping stone for me after getting settled in here.

The beginning of their community on campus at SAU was also established before they settled into the campus community. Several programs offered by SAU's Diversity Affairs Office such as Excellence in Action were integral in helping the students make their decisions to come to SAU. These efforts introduced them to many resources at the university which proved beneficial during their time at SAU. Sage noted:

I attended the Excellence in Action program, my junior year of high school and it was during the summer, so I was a rising senior, and that's what sealed the deal for me and put the idea in my mind that Southern Area was a school I could go to. And the reason it gave that idea was that during that program I saw other Native students who were college students – they were thriving, they were bubbly, they were happy, they were here, and I thought, if they could do it, I could do it. And so, I applied, and I got in.

Programs like Excellence in Action were an integral window into the Southern Area community and the Native community as well. It was a deciding factor for many of the students to attend SAU because they saw other students like them. Matthew noted, "It immediately struck me when some of the counselors were American Indian local people that I didn't even know that were there. It was an amazing experience, and that was when I really decided I wanted to pursue coming to Southern Area." Jordyn credited Excellence in Action

for solidifying her decision to attend SAU. The program also provided a community for her that was integral to her success because she says the group may have been from different backgrounds, but as a minority community they “understood the struggle on campus” which united them.

Within this community of influence was a strong set of values and beliefs the students brought to college, with one of those being the value of hard work. Paul noted,

We’re hardworking people. People who don’t like to give up. We don’t like to take no for an answer. That could be a sign of stubbornness, but it could also be a sign of determination and desire. I think the working hard aspect helped me buckle down and realize that I had to do this work, or else I was going to flunk out. And I never gave up doing it, and I graduated.

At the end of the day, the students realized they had the support around them they needed to succeed, but they had to put in the work to be successful. Even when they did not achieve success on an exam or a project, if they knew they had given their best, it made it somewhat easier to move forward. This also meant that over time, their definition of success changed as they learned about their strengths and weaknesses academically. Lisa captured this best as she wrapped up her interview. She said if she could pass along advice to any other students coming behind her she would let them know:

I feel like a big life lesson that Southern Area taught me is that sometimes our definition of success changes. And that’s okay. It does not have to be that very set definition of success X, Y, and Z that you had starting out from day one, and that it’s okay to change. And as you grow as a student, as a person, that’s likely to happen,

that definition, because you're gonna learn more, you're gonna know more, you're gonna challenge yourself. And success is gonna be different for every single person. And it can be hard, because you want to compare yourself to this person's success over here. But that's not always gonna work for you. And just being willing and being flexible to what that definition of ideas is of success change throughout your time as a college student.

Chapter Summary

A community of support proved to be integral to the success of the Lumbee students of this study. The foundation of the community they would build on the campus of Southern Area University was laid in their home communities they represented. They were taught the value of supporting each other, believing that if they approached this as a group effort, the group would experience success. Outreach to this group before they entered the university through efforts such as Excellence in Action provided a window into the community of support that existed at SAU. Programs like Southern Area Exposure and places like the American Indian Support Services center were crucial in providing a space and helping to establish the Lumbees' sense of place. These were the things that allowed them to rise above adversity and push forward to achieve their degrees. However, the lingering question remains as to whether or not the students became transcultured during their undergraduate years. This is explored in Chapter 6 of this study which also includes implications for policy, practice and research.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The experiences of American Indian students in higher education warrants further examination. Prior research (Astin, 1982; Hunt & Harrington, 2000; Tierney, 1992) has often operated from a deficit model to explicate reasons for attrition rather than persistence to degree completion. While these barriers to success are valuable building blocks for the foundation of research regarding American Indian students' experiences in higher education, contributions must also be made toward understanding why they succeed. This study examined the experiences of 16 Lumbee Indian students who left their home communities to pursue an undergraduate degree at a large, predominantly White institution referenced as Southern Area University (SAU). Using the theoretical framework of transculturation (Huffman, 1999; 2010), this study examined their experiences by addressing the research question: How can transculturation theory help us to understand and explain the experiences of Lumbee Indian students' successful college completion at a predominantly white higher education institution?

In-person interviews were conducted and recorded with the 16 participants and subsequently transcribed to reveal several themes after extensive analysis and coding. First, the interviews revealed that after entering the university, inadequate academic preparation left the students feeling an overwhelming sense of feeling underprepared, resulting in many of them questioning their fit at Southern Area University. Second, the students reported accounts of questioning their identity as American Indians resulting in a responsibility to educate the campus community. Consequently, the students realized there was an educational process they needed to undergo for themselves in order to adequately address

questions from others about their Native identity. As a result, the students began to question who they were as Lumbee people and what that identity meant to them as they began to answer the questions from others about American Indian and Lumbee culture. They knew who they were but had not previously considered that identity outside the confines of their home communities in Dogwood and Azalea counties. Lastly, their success could be contributed to a community model. Their home communities along with the community they created on the campus of SAU served to support them throughout college.

A remaining question is whether or not transculturation theory was useful in explaining their experiences at SAU. Had these students become transcultured? Did they attribute their success in any way to their culture? In this chapter, I will examine each phase of transculturation to answer this question. Four distinct phases mark the process of transculturation: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment and participation. I provide a description of each phase and then offer the experiences shared by the participants of this study, along with the salient themes, to determine the utility of transculturation in explaining the experiences of these Lumbee Indian students at Southern Area University.

Phases of Transculturation

Initial Alienation

Huffman's (1999) initial study represented Native student voices steeped in strong cultural and traditional backgrounds. One of the ways being "traditional" was defined was by the participants' tribal life on the reservation, which included "native language used in the home, the practice of Native American religion, and the active participation in a variety of traditional ceremonies" (p. 126). When these students entered the university system at a

predominantly White institution, they found many inconsistencies with their lived experiences and the way they viewed the world. This was an important phase, as some students in Huffman's study made the decision to remove themselves from the university environment as they were unable to resolve the cultural conflict they experienced; the students failed to persist. Seven of 15 students (Huffman, 1999) withdrew from college.

The Lumbee students in this study experienced a similar level of alienation when they entered Southern Area University. Students expressed that their home community stood in stark contrast to the campus community. Most often there were inconsistencies with the worldview the Lumbee students had in relation to SAU. Many of the students were not aware of how their worldview had been shaped until they encountered the perplexing questions of what it meant to be American Indian on a predominantly White campus. Additionally, they had to entertain insulting comments regarding Indians being a thing of the past and in some cases non-existent. For example, Lisa expressed shock over having to be an expert on Indian issues and Native facts, and on top of all those demands, she was expected to be a student as well.

A stark contrast between the Lumbee students in this study and those in which transculturation was examined by Huffman (1999) is the life experiences in Dogwood and Azalea counties compared to the experiences of reservation life found in the original transculturation study. The current study of the experiences of Lumbee students has made note of the differences between American Indians who live life on a reservation versus those who do not. The Lumbee students in this study live in an area of the state where there is a predominance of American Indians in their home community. Although there has

historically been a large population of Lumbee Indians in Dogwood and Azalea counties, their presence in these communities has not shielded them from assimilationist practices by the majority population. At the same time, the traditional American Indian communities of this area still exist as self-contained and self-sufficient. While Dogwood and Azalea counties are classified as economically deprived and represent some of the poorest counties in the state, there is still a stark contrast between these communities and those communities on particular reservations found out west in states such as Arizona or the mid-west like the Dakotas. Many American Indians living on reservations would likely consider life in Dogwood and Azalea as economically thriving in many ways perhaps compared to their reservation communities.

However, I believe there are similarities between both reservation and non-reservation communities, such as Dogwood and Azalea counties, that shape the experiences of their Native inhabitants. Huffman (1999) defined “traditional” American Indian students through the lens of tribal language, Native religion, and traditional ceremonies. Expanding this definition to include the Lumbee students’ experiences, we may be better able to understand Lumbee life in Dogwood and Azalea counties. In terms of a native language, one will find that Lumbees speak standard English in the home and in the community. There is not a distinct or separate tribal language that is spoken such as Navajo or Cherokee which is found on many reservations. However, there is a distinct dialect (Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick, & Oxendine, 2002) of the Lumbee that is often distinguishable and notable by others who are familiar with the Lumbee, and especially among the Lumbee themselves. Scott (2008) found that a group of Lumbee students who attended a research intensive,

predominantly White university similar to Southern Area indicated that the distinct speech pattern which was an inherent part of their identity did influence and impact their educational and social experiences. Students noted they became more cognizant of their speech patterns as different when they entered the university. As a result, they adjusted the way they spoke, and some students allowed this difference to dictate their choice of courses, with some students opting for fewer writing and speaking-intensive courses as a way to avoid the use of the Lumbee dialect. In Scott's (2008) study, one student had his family members point out the distinctness of the dialect, and, in essence, encouraged him to consider the language he would use at the university because it could lead to his marginalization by the majority.

Similarly, in my present study of Lumbee students, there were times that speaking in the "Lumbee way" impacted the students' experiences at SAU. For Sarah, this presented an entertaining exchange with others as she discussed the differences between "dumplings and paster." She also found that the accent or speech patterns she associated with being Lumbee began to change over time, and she asked if she had "forgotten where she came from" or if she had gone off to college and started "acting White" when she would return home. She admitted in some ways she had changed, but she could quickly "click in her Lumbee" and you could readily distinguish where she was from. Lisa had a different recollection as she talked about how she would sometimes refrain from speaking up in the classroom because she felt her speech was not like that of the others in her classroom, leaving her feeling ostracized at times. She later learned to embrace it but acknowledged it held her back initially from fully engaging in the classroom setting. Emily noted specifically "dialect was really hard for me up here," as her professor would "mark off" her work and oral

presentations due to the way she spoke in class. These examples are indicative of a dialect that is distinguishable and specific to the Lumbee people. While it is not a tribal language in the traditional sense, it does have attributes which are distinguishable and in varying ways have impacted Lumbee students' experiences at Southern Area. This is similar to what Dunstan (2013) found in her dissertation research wherein she established the need for including dialect under the umbrella of diversity, as it has been shown that dialect impacts the experiences of students in higher education who may not be classified as minority or under-represented. Her work suggests that students' sense of belonging and feelings of community are impacted by their dialect (Dunstan, 2013; Dunstan & Jaeger, in press). Scott (2008) establishes that the Lumbee use a distinct dialect that has been shown to influence their college experience. The participants of the present study indicate they are aware of their dialect and recognize the need to turn on or off at various times. By extension, the language they speak is connected to their home community and thus conforms to the definition of "traditional" (Huffman, 1999) which is the basis of a transcultured student.

The Lumbee students also credited their faith and religious backgrounds for much of their success. It was Sage who said:

Well, I'm a proud Lumbee, proud of my culture and heritage and faith, so for me, I was glad that I was a Lumbee because I had faith. I'm not saying no other cultures have faith, but I'm a Christian, so I believe in God, and I'm not saying that those cultures didn't, but I knew that I did. So, that faith gave me the motivation to say, I can do this, I'm not going to quit.

Thomas brought his bible to the interview. He added, “I brought that during undergrad, which was really definitely important to me not only just because where we're from church is important, but I think in undergrad it was actually, kind of when I made my faith my own. So that's kind of where I had to --when I faced troubles or whatever--that I think I turned to faith to kind of help me through difficult times.”

During some of their most difficult times, they prayed for themselves and each other to survive the demands of the university. Additionally, many of the students felt the need to find a church upon arrival at Southern Area because maintaining their spiritual life was of the utmost importance. Nathan noted finding a church was essential to his SAU experience, and initially when he could not find this community, he said he “went home a lot to go to church.”

Becky shared similar concerns about her need to connect with a community of faith at Southern Area. Becky shared, “I went home probably a little bit more than I should have. But I went home a lot of times, because I didn't have a church up here. So I always told people that I was going home to go to church. And that's transitioned now, but I needed that spiritual connection and I needed my -- I needed to go to church with my family to have that spiritual connection.”

As they learned more about traditional ways and understandings some of the students incorporated these in their spiritual lives as they were able to find common ground between their Christian and traditional Native practices. The students adopted certain ceremonial traditions such as burning sage before events and smudging in order to cleanse the soul and the mind before entering into a particular ceremony. For these Lumbees, there was a hybrid

of Native religious practice that would define their cultural norms at SAU but the roots of this began in the home communities they represented. For example, some of the participants like Jordyn had always been a part of the powwow community as a dancer and traditional singer growing up, so participating in more traditional activities was not unfamiliar. Oftentimes it was someone like Jordyn who helped bridge the gap for other American Indian students who may not have had this level of Indigenous knowledge. For these students, Jordyn could serve as the conduit between traditional ways and practices and their Christian beliefs.

Next I will discuss the second stage of transculturation which is self-discovery. Within this stage, students discover who they are and come to the realization that they can survive in a world that is unlike the one they come from. They can learn to embrace the college environment without losing sight of where they came from or who they are in the process. They learn to be themselves by embracing their culture on a different level.

Self-Discovery

The successful transcultured student is able to move beyond alienation as a result of their culture. If they successfully navigate the “transculturation threshold” (Huffman, 1999, p. 131), they enter the stage of self-discovery. Self-discovery is associated with continued learning and understanding of the values and norms of the college campus while holding them in the light of the students’ traditional cultural beliefs and understandings. Ultimately, the successful student has crossed the threshold of understanding that they can retain their cultural norms without having to assimilate into the majority culture of the institution.

Essentially they learned they had “not lost their Indianness and yet they had survived academically” (Huffman, 1999, p. 134).

After reviewing the data, I did not see the Lumbee students in this study as overly concerned about a loss of identity. They knew who they were in the context of their community. James indicated back home in Dogwood county you never had to “validate it” when describing what it was like to be Lumbee at SAU. Elizabeth noted, American Indians and especially Lumbees, know who they are and “they’re proud of their heritage.” She indicated the Lumbee are a proud people and she was taught this growing up. She would describe a shift in her identity, but she never expressed a concern about losing who she was as a result of her experience at Southern Area. Elizabeth went on to say:

I feel like my definition of identity has definitely changed. I feel like as time went on, I still identified myself as a native student, but I guess, like I feel like I feel it didn't really feel a part of this place until the beginning of my senior year, to be honest, and I felt like, that's when I finally felt like I had grown accustom and felt a part of this place.

I do believe they understood they would undergo some changes as they became socialized in the new college environment. Some of the students wanted to experience the newness of SAU, but they also did not want to veer too far off the path of what they knew to be familiar as a way of staying grounded. Part of this process was juggling the community of Southern Area and their home community of Dogwood or Azalea County. James discussed how he purposefully tried to become part of the campus community early by staying at Southern Area as a way to overcome the feelings of missing home, while being mindful that

family did not perceive him as forgetting his roots. James noted, “Initially, I was always trying to go home as much as possible but you don’t want to go home too much and not too little. It’s like I’m neglecting them and stuff. Like, don’t forget where you came from and stuff.”

The Lumbee students in this study did reach the threshold and moved forward with the transculturation process. Integral to this process is how they started to acclimate and adjust to the campus of Southern Area. I asked about how they settled into the campus and what was important to this process. Many of the students reported the responsibility they had to their communities and their families as the reasons they persisted in their early years. I recall some students who were cognizant of the limited number of American Indians in general and Lumbees specifically who had preceded them. In many ways, this was still uncharted territory for American Indians, and the participants understood the significance of their presence on the campus.

They relied on the principles of hard work and community to help them push through. I recall Thomas talking about what he would classify as “grit.” It was the principle of hard work that he saw as ingrained in the Lumbee. This principle was often learned in the tobacco fields that his grandfather once walked. While Thomas, like many of the students in this study, may have never cropped tobacco or pulled cotton, he understood the value Lumbees placed on working hard and making an honest living. He believed that you could achieve what you wanted in life if you worked hard for it and did not expect a handout. The Lumbee students in this study had survived because they were Lumbee, and persevere is what Lumbees do.

Within this particular stage of the transculturation process, Huffman (1999) notes “a greater sense of purpose produced by an enhanced and secure sense of ethnic identity were characteristic features of the self-discovery stage,” (p. 135). Similarly, the Lumbee students in this study began to rely on their culture to help them settle into SAU and find their place. Initially, many of them were taken aback due to the repeated inquiries about their Indianness. The students did not know how to interpret these requests because they never had to entertain such questions in their home communities. They grew accustomed to the questions and actually embraced this as an opportunity to help others learn about American Indian culture.

Through their own personal journeys of self-discovery, they learned that they did not have to always shun such questions or feel the need to be an expert on Indian issues. They did feel a responsibility to understand more about themselves and Native culture to address concerns others had. As they sought this information, they used this as a way to bring others into their world and have them understand their experiences as Lumbee students.

Many of the students developed stronger beliefs and value systems around their culture and strengthened their identity, which in turn shifted the academic focus. This was evidenced by their change of major and the overall course they charted for their lives. Nathan noted he decided to major in American Indian studies because, “It helped me better understand who I am and who I should be, and what I need to help do for my people.” Admittedly, some of these changes were influenced by the academic rigor of the university. Many of the Lumbee participants admitted they came in with a major in the sciences and a future most often situated in healthcare which was quickly altered by the demands of their first science course and what the students considered inadequate academic preparation.

One thing that did not waver was the sense of responsibility to their communities and to each other. Educating others about Native issues resulted in some of the students deciding on careers that would impact their communities in areas such as policy, education and social work, which they had not considered prior to enrolling at Southern Area. The need to engage in a future career that would positively impact their communities became more important. Even after graduating, some of the participants are still searching for their place to make this contribution. It was Clifford who said that while he is still trying to determine his life's goal, he knows he wants to do something that will impact and help his people. He noted, "It's just now that I'm in a different point in my life, I still don't know exactly what it is that I want to do, but I want to give back to my people. But I feel like that too will come in time."

Realignment

Moving to the third stage of transculturation involves realignment. This particular stage involves the students evaluating their values and beliefs in light of those of the institution. Students have a deeper understanding of the institution as well as other Indian and non-Indian individuals, and they use their culture to help guide them through this understanding. The students begin to feel even more settled, and they understood they could adopt some of the mainstream views of the university while holding on to those they associate with being American Indian.

Realignment means that the individual student begins to adopt some of the ways of the university as a means to acclimate but not necessarily assimilate. It is a matter of realizing that to thrive and succeed and navigate this world, they will have to allow

themselves to be more a part of it and do so without diminishing their Indianness. In essence one can be in the world of mainstream society of the university but not of it.

This implies that there has been a shift of some sort and indeed this is what the Lumbee students experienced at various levels. Paul explained this as he discussed his expanding circle of friends. When he came to SAU, he held tightly to his Native friends from his home community but realized over time it would be okay to embrace other individuals and groups of students. He noted, “We decided that we needed more diverse friends than just the people who came in with us. If you don’t have more diverse friends, you can’t expand your mindset and your way of thinking.”

At this stage, the students have gained an understanding that the world of the university environment does not always align with their cultural values and beliefs or their lived experiences. To make sense of this, they had to delve deeper into their understanding of what it meant to be an American Indian on the campus of Southern Area. As a result, this meant they began to examine the traditional ways they had been taught and reflected on how their worldview had been shaped. Nathan is a great example of this as he talked about his religious convictions which he thought would not allow him to remain on campus at Southern Area. He cried his first night on campus, but he soon came to see that if he was to survive and be successful, he had to find a way to maintain his identity while also embracing the world of SAU. One of the ways he did this was accepting that he had to operate a certain way on campus, express his viewpoints when necessary and then find comfort in his church community on the weekend.

Huffman's (1999) study provided accounts of how students changed the way they may have acted or interacted with one group versus another. Similarly, in the present study, some of the participants discussed this as well. It was Thomas who likened his experience to a chameleon. The environment of SAU required a level of adaptation, and part of this process involved a level of consciousness about values and norms in various settings. Thomas noted how he would interact with different groups of students in different ways as a means to navigate various communities on campus. Several students—Becky, Clifford, Emily, Lisa, Matthew and Sage—talked about how they “code-switched” in order to survive. While these types of situations may have been awkward and challenging to navigate in the beginning, over time, the students did report a certain level of comfort because this was what they had to do. They also welcomed opportunities to bring non-Natives into their world at activities such as powwows on campus. When individuals, both Native and non-Native, attended and were curious about the happenings of the day, some of the Lumbee students welcomed this opportunity to explain and provide a level of understanding the uninitiated did not have. This became a way the students were able to bridge two seemingly disparate worlds together in order to achieve success.

Participation

The final stage of the transculturation process is participation. At this point, the transcultured student is more confident in who they are and in their academic abilities. They are more fully integrated into the campus environment. To arrive at this place the student has demonstrated the ability to successfully navigate in the Indian and non-Indian worlds. As a result the student is “positioned to fulfill the goal of completing their education” (Huffman,

2010, p. 199). Most importantly, the student has come to the realization that they can be Indian in the non-Indian world that exists on the college campus. This is crucial, because for the Lumbee students in this study, it meant they had arrived at an understanding of their identity in a greater context. This was essential to their survival in a world dominated by mainstream culture and ideals.

Integral to maintaining participation in the university environment is incorporating the support of other American Indians or known advocates of American Indian issues who are on the campus. This support system allows the students to engage the campus and focus on being a student. The ultimate goal for these students is to earn their college degrees and with a sufficient support system in place they are able to do that.

The Lumbee students in this study were very specific about the support system they used to be successful. Their support system was a clearly-identified community that existed in two forms both on and off campus. Off campus, they talked about things like their home communities. For a majority of the students, they revealed they went home often to spend time with their families and community members in order to recharge before returning to Southern Area. It was this connection that often gave them the energy to push through another week, another month and another semester. For some, it was important to go home and attend a church service now and then to meet their spiritual needs. Physical needs were also met by sitting down to dinner with family and engaging in conversation that did not have to be academic or require a certain vernacular to be accepted. It was here that they could just be themselves; they could be Lumbee.

With time, the students found they could be their authentic selves. Important to finding their place and their voice on campus was the strong community of support they had on campus. The American Indian Support Center was a place where students could go and feel at home. When they were tired from questions about their identity or when the world they had experienced that day did not align with the world they knew, they would come here and find a respite.

The noted the support of the staff as a major contributor to a positive campus experience. Additionally they talked about the value of having an American Indian academic adviser who saw the world the way they did but also helped them make the connection to the world they were now experiencing. He assisted with academic concerns and directed them to various resources across campus to support their college journey. There were also other advocates the students could call upon as well such as other American Indian faculty and staff. It is important to note that some of these faculty and staff members were also non-Native yet had some level of cultural competence as it relates to American Indians and this built trust with the students. Offices like the Diversity Affairs Office provided a place and a mechanism for the students to engage in outreach to their Native communities through recruitment and visitation programs.

Course offerings about American Indians were also crucial because they validated the students and sent a university-wide message that the contributions of Native peoples to the university, the state and the world was important and all peoples needed to have some knowledge of this information. When the Lumbee students were unable to articulate a

certain depth and breadth of knowledge about American Indians they could suggest taking a course offered by the university.

This study demonstrates transculturation to be a promising theory to help frame the experiences of American Indian students in higher education. Specifically, the utility of transculturation was extended by examining the experiences of the Lumbee students in this study as they recounted their time at Southern Area University. As alumni of the university, this theory was particularly helpful in situating their four years within the particular phases of transculturation which allows for a deeper understanding of what it meant for these students to experience a predominantly White university as American Indians.

The participants in this study talked about the varying degrees to which they experienced alienation at the university. Albeit to different experiences, they shared accounts of how the world they knew was at times in conflict with the world of Southern Area due, in large part, to many of the cultural values, beliefs and principles they brought with them to college. Simultaneously, these same values would help them ground themselves in order to survive and make sense of the world that at times did not align with what they knew in either Dogwood or Azalea counties. Through their individual and group journeys of self-discovery, they learned to embrace their culture as well as the culture of Southern Area in order to fully participate in the college experience to earn their college degrees. Indeed, they successfully graduated by keeping their identity in tact as American Indian students.

Implications

This study provided empirical data regarding the experience of 16 Lumbee Indian students who attended a predominantly White institution of higher learning. Transculturation

theory served as the lens through which to view their experiences. The data revealed several major themes which spoke to how the students navigated the world of Southern Area University after matriculating from high school and then to successful degree completion. These findings provide implications for practice, policy, theory and future research. Implications for practice are discussed in the next section, followed by policy, theory and future research.

Implication for Practice

Transculturation provides a lens through which to view the experiences of American Indian students with strong cultural connections to their communities and tribal customs. Experiencing the mainstream environment of a predominantly White university often presents challenges for students who come from more traditional backgrounds. The findings of this study suggest ways universities can engage American Indian students to support culturally appropriate socialization to the university environment to help ensure positive experiences and aid their academic success.

First, with an emphasis on success rather than attrition, transculturation theory offers practitioners in the field of higher education a way to understand how American Indian students come to be successful in the university system. Transculturation offers a series of touch points to impact the experiences of American Indian students from recruitment and outreach to admission and their persistence to graduation. As one example, the study participants' stories contained reflections about misalignment of values and beliefs along with ways of being and doing. In their communities, they operated in tandem with their families and friends. Some students reported the lack of a teamwork approach, and one

participant insinuated that Southern Area fostered an environment of competitiveness that put the students at odds with each other. Awareness that some traditional American Indian students will likely encounter some level of alienation early in their undergraduate careers has implications for recruitment and retention programming.

Universities must develop culturally relevant programming in order to ensure students' successful transition, transculturation and persistence to graduation. This programming must begin with recruitment in terms of outreach to the communities of American Indian students. American Indian students' worldview has often been shaped by their communities which include both immediate and extended family members. Many of the Lumbee students in this study commented about how their churches, which are often extensions of their family, prayed for them and made frequent inquiries about their well-being.

It is important for families and communities of American Indian students to know their students will be supported and cared for. Outreach efforts by universities to these communities help to establish trust-building to further ensure student success. This validates the community and demonstrates the value-added benefit of their input. Additionally, this translates as the university's willingness to be a collaborative partner by building on the foundation the students have been equipped with in their home communities and extending it in a supportive, culturally sensitive environment. Although universities are experiencing various financial constraints, they would do well to direct some resources to support at least one staff position tasked with American Indian student recruitment. When this is not feasible, it is important to consider potential collaborations with other campus offices to

accomplish this goal. For example, utilizing other willing American Indian faculty and staff on the campus who might inform the university about community and tribal connections as well as the culture in general can be helpful. While an American Indian staff person in an IT department may not be directly engaged in the student experience, it is likely they could have ties to an American Indian community of interest to the university. This connection would be valuable to the university's introduction to the community.

Second, beyond entry into the university, the establishment of offices and services on campus that will work with American Indian students to help meet their needs while navigating the mainstream and Native worlds is imperative. Providing a means for the students to tap into their cultural backgrounds in order to move past alienation and on to the transculturation threshold is essential. Existing programs such as American Indian support centers and American Indian studies departments, along with academic advising and retention offices whose mission is to work with underrepresented populations, need to be equipped with the resources to adequately address American Indian students' unique concerns. These staff must be willing to learn about other cultures with which they are not familiar. As a practitioner in the field, I understand too often these important tasks are assigned to one person or one office, yet, as this study has shown, it takes a community of informed individuals to support the American Indian student experience.

One example of such support is fostering the collaboration between an entity such as an American Indian support center and an office such as academic advising. Academic advisors should assist students with connecting their academic goals and personal goals that may include some service or benefit to their tribal communities. Thus, providing

opportunities for students such as internships that may involve work in or at least contribute to Native communities is of value to American Indian students, and an office such as an American Indian support center can assist with this effort. Quite often, the Lumbee students in this study exhibited some level of commitment to serving Native peoples or their own Lumbee communities. Engaging in this work during the undergraduate years strengthens the cultural relevance of their education and thus aids retention and graduation.

Lastly, American Indian student success and achievement should be viewed as a pan-university responsibility. It could be inferred that colleges and universities struggle to find the best way to serve American Indian students because they assume the culture to be somewhat elusive. However, I would argue that maintaining a degree of physical and cultural distance between themselves and the mainstream culture of the college community has been a way in which American Indians have worked to protect what remains of their culture which has been dismantled in various ways due to the encroachment of outsiders. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) offer insight into the guarded nature of American Indians which often stems from a history that has abused our cultural capital and not served American Indians well. As Adams (1995) reminds us, the seminal purpose of early American Indian education in this country was originally to eradicate Native ways of knowing (Adams, 1995). Over the years, American Indian peoples have worked to assert their Indigenous right to protect, shield and hone their own through tribal and community practices. In university settings, faculty, staff and students should be aware that American Indian people are willing to meet where the ground is level if the opportunity presents itself. That place is where we

agree that education engages and empowers as opposed to diminishes American Indian students' voices.

As such, universities would do well to seek the advice and counsel of their enrolled American Indian students and seek to build bridges with these students' families and communities to inform policy, procedure and practice. Universities have a responsibility to recruit and retain American Indian faculty and staff as well as this has been noted to positively impact the experiences of American Indian students, especially on predominantly White campuses. For campuses where there are not many, if any, American Indian faculty and staff, seeking the input of currently enrolled American Indian students is a step in the right direction to better meeting their needs and increasing their participation and persistence to graduation.

Implications for Policy

Developing policy implications from the data of this study proved to be a difficult task. The data lent itself to more procedural implications, but I kept returning to the overarching theme of this study, which I determine to be community. Universities must examine their current policies and their impact on the creation of community for American Indian students. Because the students placed emphasis on community support and moving through the university environment as a group, policies regarding student housing could have significant implications. For example, a residence hall floor could be offered as a housing choice for American Indian students who come from the same community and might prefer staying with each other until they develop other social networks as they acclimate to the university environment. Such accommodations should not be mandatory, as some American

Indian students may not opt for this choice, and some would not want to be labeled by having a floor designated for them. Yet offering some type of living learning experience specific to American Indians could be a critical element in addressing community for this population of students. University administrators would benefit from hosting focus groups with enrolled American Indian students to ascertain the appropriateness of such an initiative.

Similarly, some colleges and universities have housing policies that require first-year students to reside on campus. For American Indian students who attend these campuses and live within commuting distance, this could prove cumbersome and unsupportive. This policy might be enforced with some leniency toward this particular group as their home communities are often their lifeline. It is within the community they find their encouragement and sometimes the strength to persist. Although the participants within this study were two hours away from their home community, some chose to return as often as they could and it was that return that helped them push through another week.

There is also room for universities to engage the education and awareness piece of American Indian culture and the student experience. Quite often the participants of this study talked about the responsibility they had to ensure others knew about their culture. They also noted how some units on campus such as the American Indian Support Center and faculty and staff assisted in this effort. While this was helpful, awareness was often contained to certain segments of the campus. For example, the students enrolled in American Indian studies classes may have gained some insight, or students who decided to attend an event hosted by the American Indian Support Center or the Native Student Organization

would have had an opportunity to engage in some activity. However, the broader campus was still void of an overarching effort aimed at increasing cultural competence.

The data from this study speaks to two possible interventions colleges and universities can readily engage as long as it is done in a culturally appropriate way. This means these entities must consult with current American Indian faculty, staff and students and also engage Native communities. Most universities require all newly enrolling first-year and transfer students to attend some type of formal orientation program at the beginning of the academic year. Additionally, some institutions have moved to add diversity requirements for their students into their curricula. To meet this requirement, the university might consider requiring an online diversity webinar, for example, that would introduce all students to the campus community. A component of this presentation could address particular American Indian tribes and communities served by the university. In the case of Southern Area, this institution serves the largest population of American Indians east of the Mississippi, the Lumbee, in addition to many other tribes. It is essential to the educational mission of these institutions that students attending Southern Area and universities within the area of SAU be aware of this most notable, historical fact. They are attending universities where the nation's First Peoples still thrive and their culture is alive and a vibrant part of the tapestry of the diverse student body.

Additionally, a similar type of educational requirement should be considered for the faculty, staff and administration of the university. This offering could be a part of a Human Resources effort such as orientation for new employees, and existing employees would benefit from a deeper understanding and awareness of the students they serve. Together

these initiatives serve to educate the entire campus community in an effort to create a supportive environment for American Indian students specifically and enhance the college experience for the entire student body.

Implications for Research

Further research is needed regarding the experiences of American Indian students and their education at all levels, but in particular at the collegiate stage. In particular, there is also a need to understand more about the experiences of American Indian students like the Lumbee who are from tribal areas that are non-reservation lands but have a distinct, cultural community which shares some similarities to reservation areas. Dogwood and Azalea counties in this study are not reservation lands, yet they are considered rural and in many ways economically under-resourced. Much of the existing literature about American Indian students focuses on American Indian students who come from tribal reservations, which is a very different way of life than that which the Lumbee students of the present study have experienced. In particular, additional information is needed from other southeast tribes who have experienced years of colonization yet view themselves as not assimilated. They may have adopted majority ways in order to survive, but they still rely on traditional means as a way of survival. Their Indianness is celebrated in their communities and they have a strong sense of identity, but their stories do not pervade the existing literature.

Future studies of Lumbee Indian college students should reexamine their experiences within the academy longitudinally as they progress from year-to-year. The students in the present study had successfully graduated from Southern Area University within the last 5 years. While we know they successfully completed their degrees, it would be valuable to

understand how they became transcultured as they experienced college and made meaning of that experience. For those students who do not become transcultured, this would also provide data regarding the reasons that this process did not occur.

While the present study did not focus on identity development specifically, it is evident that identity development is integral to understanding the beliefs, values and worldview of American Indian students. Essential to transculturation is the understanding that this theory is applicable to students who are rooted in strong tribal customs and values and have a strong sense of self. That fact that transcultured students exhibit strong ties to their Native communities as well as thrive on community influence is evident in the way they see and traverse the world. For many people outside of Native culture, the idea of Indianness has often been shaped by media portrayals, so upon the mention of American Indians, stereotypical images of people with darker skin tones and long flowing hair often come to outsiders' minds. Additionally, reservations with teepees and other images of a storied past emerge as the definition of American Indian culture. As evidenced by this study, the Lumbee are a people with strong community connections and an identity that does not align with these images which have, unfortunately, informed the understandings that the majority culture holds regarding American Indians. Future studies would benefit from delving into how American Indians define themselves so that those unfamiliar with American Indian cultures can develop new understandings about the complexity of American Indian identity. Future research should include a diverse array of Native voices to tell a somewhat collective yet varied story of American Indians in higher education.

Lastly, additional research incorporating transculturation theory warrants closer examination of how American Indian students define participation and become part of the campus community. Some participants in the present study reflected on their time at Southern Area with a level of regret because they felt they may not have fully engaged the college experience. While they attributed their degree completion to their culture, some noted it may have held them back. Lisa talked about how she wished she had taken advantage of opportunities like study abroad or engaging student government, yet she refrained because this was an unknown world to her. It was interesting that after some time away, she, along with a few others, reflected on the things they wish they had done in terms of branching out into other communities on campus. They felt very safe and supported in their Native community on campus, but future investigations should consider to what degree the students feel they are a part of the life of the campus. Universities also have a responsibility to evaluate their policies and procedures surrounding diversity programming and how it is weaved into the fabric of the university in order to provide a full experience to all students.

Implications for Theory

Transculturation theory and Huffman's work (1999, 2010) is a useful framework for understanding the experiences of American Indian students in higher education. Recent research (Larimore & McClellan, 2005) calls for further development of the theory and its application to various tribal entities. Applying this theory to the experience of Lumbee students in higher education at a predominantly White institution further promulgates this particular lens.

One criticism I have of the theory which Huffman (2010) acknowledges has been noted by others, is that the onus for the transculturation process seems to be placed solely on the student, leaving little, if any, burden of the responsibility on the institution to take ownership of this process and meet the students halfway. In this particular study, the Lumbee students did draw on their culture as an “anchor” to keep them grounded while pursuing their studies. The students attributed a great deal of their success to family and community support in addition to the community they developed on the campus of Southern Area University. However, it should be noted there was a certain level of institutional commitment of Southern Area to creating this community. There were stories about how excited the students were to learn about course offerings about American Indians, and at various points these offerings included a course about Lumbee Indians. Additionally, the institution had an American Indian Support Center where the students had a place to call their own and feel at home. Students also relayed how valuable it was to have an academic adviser who was American Indian and could understand their concerns academically, socially, emotionally and personally. American Indian faculty and staff were instrumental in supporting the students as well.

The Lumbee students in this study had a strong cultural identity and ties to their communities. This was crucial to their success at Southern Area as they chose to persist amid the challenges they encountered. However, I would caution that the reasons included in this study for persistence can easily be ascribed to attrition as well. The support of their families and influence of their home communities could have served to encourage withdrawal had the students not been able to express themselves culturally on the campus of

SAU. Their Indianness was encouraged and supported by various units, along with faculty and staff. An environment that is conducive to American Indian students being able to live out their Indianness is crucial. The environment as described by the Lumbee students in this study became arduous at times, yet they implied the students chose a supportive campus that provided various resources to augment their educational experience as Natives. It is important that other institutions acknowledge their role in providing culturally-relevant opportunities for American Indian students to engage and be engaged in order to ensure the academic success of the students and the institution. Anyone reading this study must recognize the efforts of the university to support the participants' experience. The university has a significant role to play in how they engage students and their communities so that the college community also becomes the community of their people.

Lastly, I believe transculturation theory should be expanded in terms of how American Indian students are defined as "traditional" to further its utility. A cursory review of the literature on transculturation reveals students considered "traditional" often represented tribal communities situated on reservation lands with a spoken tribal language. Although the Lumbee do not live on a reservation like some tribes, and they do not speak a tribal language, the Lumbee people define themselves in culturally-distinct ways regardless of the hegemonic labels others may try to impose. Scholars and practitioners of American Indian student success, retention and persistence may be quick to discredit this theory due to what is seemingly a limited scope. However, I would argue if there is space for broadening the definition of "traditional," this theory can be useful as a framework for understanding the experiences of Native peoples in academia.

Conclusions

This study examined the experiences of Lumbee Indian students on the campus of a predominantly White university. Participants resided in the same tribal community before entering college and thus represented a specific tribal area. This study does not purport to represent the experiences of all American Indians or all Lumbees. Transculturation theory (Huffman, 1999; 2010) was used as the theoretical lens through which to view the experiences of these students. The following research question was addressed: How can transculturation theory help us to understand and explain the experiences of Lumbee Indian students at a predominantly White institution?

Using qualitative methods, this research's findings expand the existing knowledge regarding American Indians in higher education. First, this study gives voice to a group of students, the Lumbee, who have been missing from this narrative. Researchers, practitioners and others in higher education now have much needed data to inform their understanding of American Indian students from a perspective that is rarely represented in research.

Second, this study is important for American Indian students and their families. Many of these students are the first in their families to attend college and are eager to read first-hand accounts of what it is like to experience higher education from a Native perspective. This information is valuable to families and communities such as the Lumbee as they seek to understand how to help and better equip their students to engage the college environment. This is crucial to these communities because they believe in the value of education, and they rely on the stories of those who have gone before them. As a member of

this community, I know first-hand the importance of education and what it has meant for the economic and professional development of our people.

Third, this study expands a current theory regarding American Indian students' experiences within higher education. Transculturation theory is promising as it situates the culture of students as the fundamental foundation of their success. Because of their cultural connections, students are able to survive and thrive as they progress toward degree completion.

Lastly, this study calls for institutions of higher education to question how their policy and procedural choices impact the experiences of all students, but in particular the experiences of American Indian students as they pursue higher education. As this study demonstrates, colleges and universities must engage American Indian students holistically and not singularly, as these students often navigate the campus in conjunction with their communities and families rather than separate from them.

At times during this process, I found myself questioning, "Where is the newness of what the participants have to say?" Many of the stories the students shared with me were not unfamiliar, and I realized this was due to several reasons. The stories of my participants were similar to my own 22 years later. I can recall feeling isolated at times as I worked toward my undergraduate and even graduate degrees because I was oftentimes the lone voice in my classroom. I, too, felt the weight of being Lumbee in a world that often did not align with what I knew, and I adopted and adapted as needed to survive without losing sight of who I was.

This study replicates some findings of previous studies (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Rindone, 1988; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995) regarding American Indian students in higher education. This raises questions regarding the extent to which we, as practitioners, have listened to American Indian students with culturally-sensitive ears. Or have we continued to dismiss what Native students have said to us and treated them as if what they have to say is not relevant to their experience in higher education? When will academia as a whole begin to implement the strategies our Native students tell us work and serve to support them to degree completion? When we do, I believe the narratives of American Indian students will change as we effect change that benefits Native students, their communities and the universities that serve them.

As a Lumbee Indian graduate student and practitioner in a university setting, I am left feeling empowered by the students in this study. The students have spoken and informed my work, which I have now done for years; there is still plenty of room to grow. They have defined themselves and how they view success. Similar to these students', my experience has not been my own; my success was not just my success. My educational journey has only been possible because of the support of my family and community as well.

As Brayboy (2005) notes, residing within our Lumbee stories are the theories of how we experience, how we survive. It is our responsibility to learn from these stories. This study contains the stories of a group of students who decided against all the odds they would survive and attain their undergraduate degrees. For the Lumbee, the pursuit of education has always been part of our fiber. It has always been, as my parents told me, something that once attained, cannot be taken away.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
Submission for New Studies

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted:
Title of Project: Navigating the Academy: Lumbee Indian Students and Higher Education
Principal Investigator: Marcus L. Collins
Principal Investigator Email: collinsm@email.unc.edu
Department: Higher Education Administration
Campus Box Number: 7801
Phone Number: 919-515-6238
Faculty Sponsor Name if Student Submission: Audrey Jaeger
Faculty Sponsor Email Address if Student Submission: audrey_jaeger@ncsu.edu
Source of Funding (Sponsor, Federal, External, etc): If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number:
RANK: Faculty: <input type="checkbox"/> ; Student: <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> PhD; Other: EdD

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature

Principal Investigator:

Marcus L. Collins

(typed/printed name)

(signature)

(date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature (or electronic submission) testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.

Faculty Sponsor:

Audrey Jaeger

(typed/printed name)

(signature)

(date)

PLEASE COMPLETE AND E-MAIL TO: irb-coordinator@ncsu.edu

Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document. *Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.

For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

Exempt Approved Approved pending modifications
 Table

Expedited Review Category: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8a 8b 8c 9

Reviewer Name
Date

Signature

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

This research project seeks to understand the experience of Lumbee Indian students in the university. As such, recent graduates of Southern Area University will be interviewed about their experiences on campus.

This research is important because little is known and understood about the experience of American Indian students in higher education. This project serves to advance this knowledge by contributing to the literature on American Indian students in college.

If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

This dissertation research is in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Education.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

How many subjects will be involved in the research?

I expect to solicit stories from 10-15 individuals who are willing to share their experiences.

Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

Subjects will be recruited via email. (See attached). They will be asked about their willingness to participate in this research effort to learn more about how they experienced college using their stories and reflections.

List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

The research participants will have graduated recently, within the last 5 years, from Southern Area University. These participants will also be self-identified as Lumbee Indian. Additionally, they will be from the rural, southeastern part of the state of North Carolina which the majority of Lumbee Indians consider home.

Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

I will work with the American Indian Support Center at Southern Area to identify American Indian alumni to participate in this research. I will email them individually (see attached) to ask if they are willing to be a part of this research effort.

I will exclude anyone who would ask to participate in this study yet they do not meet the criteria of having graduated from SAU within the last 5 years, being a self-identified member of the Lumbee tribe, and originally from the southeastern part of North Carolina.

Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

During their undergraduate years at SAU, I have served as their academic advisor to varying degrees, meaning I have worked with some closer than others. Additionally, many will most likely have participated in student organizations I advise as well.

Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- fetuses
- pregnant women
- persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- persons with physical disabilities
- economically or educationally disadvantaged
- prisoners
- elderly
- students from a class taught by principal investigator
- other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

For many of the students from this area of this state, they are considered to be from an economically and educationally disadvantaged area, Dogwood and Azalea counties. However, the degree to which the students present with these issues varies depending on specific backgrounds, etc.

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

- 1). Students will be contacted individually via email and asked to participate in this research effort. I will explain that if they agree to participate, we will be discussing their experience as an American Indian student, specifically Lumbee, within the university.
- 2). If the student agrees, I will follow-up with asking the student for a mutually convenient time that we can meet to conduct the interview. I will also inform them that I would like them to bring along any special item from

their undergraduate years that serves to bring back memories of their time. I will go on to say these can include photos, books, gift items or special mementos.

3). Once an interview time and location have been determined we will meet to conduct the interview. I will review the goal of the research once again and let the student know that his or her stories regarding their experience in higher education will be recorded. I will go on to explain that I will record the interview, with their permission, and these recordings will then be transcribed to begin analysis. Additionally, I will review the informed consent form and ask the student to sign if they agree to their participation in this research project.

4). Interviews should last from an hour and a half to two hours.

5). Interviews and transcripts will be stored in a secure location which includes a password protected laptop and iPad, along with a file cabinet that is locked to store hard copies of materials, etc.

6). When the interviews are transcribed, all information identifying the student such as name, hometown, etc. will be removed and pseudonyms will be used. I will ask each research participant to choose a pseudonym he or she would like to use that will only be known by the research participant and the researcher. Any notes taken by the researcher will use assigned pseudonyms as well.

7). Interviews will be transcribed and coded to reveal themes and this information will be shared with the research participants. Participants will be asked, through member checking, if the information as I understand it is a fair and accurate representation of what they have reported.

8). A final report of the research project will be presented to my dissertation committee in the form of a completed dissertation.

How much time will be required of each subject?

Each research participant should spend no more than 2-3 hours on this research effort which would include an initial interview and any follow-up meetings, conducted through phone or in-person as needed.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

1). Psychological risks: As students recount their past experiences on the college campus, there could be some issues that might come up that are of a sensitive nature. This is not anticipated, however, if it does, I am connected to various on-campus resources such as psychological counseling which can provide referrals for outside service providers if needed.

2). Social/cultural risks: Representing an underrepresented population such as the American Indian tribe of the Lumbee can be seen as a risk. It would be easy to assume that the voice of these students is representative of all Lumbee people, which is not the case.

I have taken steps in my research proposal to reiterate the purpose of this research is not to generalize these findings to a greater population of American Indians or other groups, including the Lumbee. Additionally, pseudonyms will be used to for the research participants so that they remain anonymous.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

No

If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

No

How will data be recorded and stored?

Data will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Voice recorded files will be stored on a password protected laptop computer and/or iPad which remains in the possession of the researcher at all times. Notes, researcher journals and other hard copies of information will be locked and stored in a portable filing cabinet in the possession of the researcher.

How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Research participants will be given pseudonyms and identified in notes and materials by pseudonym and not by real name.

How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

The researcher will review interview transcripts with research participants to make sure accurate information has been obtained and interpreted by the researcher. Interviews will be transcribed and coded resulting in the derivation of themes across the data. These themes among participants will be reported in the final dissertation.

If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Audio recorded interviews will be stored in data files on a locked, password protected laptop and/or iPad. Only the researcher will have access to these items. Notes, researcher journals and other hard copies of information will be stored in a portable filing cabinet in the possession of the researcher at all time. After the study is completed, the files will be deleted and destroyed.

Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

There are no direct benefits to the subjects involved in this research. An indirect benefit from participation in this study is the information derived may have implications for informing, improving and enriching the college experience of American Indian students.

COMPENSATION

Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for

subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

N/A

G COLLABORATORS

If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on Cover Page) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

N/A

Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

Yes. Access will be granted to my dissertation chair and research methodologist as needed to inform the research process required to fulfill the dissertation requirement for my program.

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project? No

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? No

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

*Please consider taking the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

Appendix B: Informed Consent

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study

Navigating the Academy: Lumbee Indian Students and Higher Education

Principal Investigator

Marcus L. Collins, Doctoral Student

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable)

Audrey Jaeger, Dissertation Chair

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the college experience of American Indian students. Specifically, this study aims to understand how American Indian students' culture impacts or influences their college experience.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1). Participate in an interview with the researcher which will last an hour and a half to two hours.
- 2). The researcher will ask you questions about your experience in college as an American Indian student. It is of interest to the researcher to know how you approached the idea of going to college, how you were connected to your campus both academically and socially, and how you reflect on your overall experience as a recent graduate. These questions will be framed within your culture as a Lumbee Indian student.
- 3). After the interview process, the researcher will conduct member checks which involves contacting you, the research participant, to make sure I have accurately recorded and interpreted what you have shared during your interview time. I expect this to take no more

than 30 minutes to one hour. This can occur in person or over the telephone as needed. All effort will be made to ensure this is convenient for you to ensure your unhindered participation.

4). Interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient location. Since you are most likely still in the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill area, I propose a location the area which is convenient and conducive to conducting a research interview.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. Participants are not required to answer any question with which they feel uncomfortable.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. However, the knowledge gained from this study may assist future American Indian students who choose to go to college. This research has the potential to

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a password protected laptop computer and/or iPad. Additionally, any notes or hard copies of information related to this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the possession of the researcher. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

Compensation

You will not receive anything for participating in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Marcus L. Collins, collinsm@email.unc.edu or 919-219-0667.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____

Date _____

Investigator's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C: Email Solicitation

Dear [Mr. / Ms. LAST NAME],

My name is Marcus Collins and I am a doctoral student at North Carolina State University. I am preparing for my doctoral research project.

I am writing to tell you about a study I am conducting about the experiences of American Indian students, specifically Lumbee, who have recently completed their undergraduate degree at a research university. Because you have just completed your undergraduate degree, I invite you to consider joining me in this research effort by participating in a conversational interview regarding your time at the university.

I want to note this email solicitation does not require you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation in this research effort is completely voluntary. I am contacting you because I would like to see if you are interested in learning more about this research effort and how you can be involved.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please feel free to respond to this email indicating your interest. Please include any preliminary questions or concerns which I can address. Should you express an interest in participating I can email you with additional details and coordinate a time to meet to have a conversation about your higher education experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this research effort.
Sincerely,

Marcus L. Collins
NCSU, Graduate Student

Dear [Mr. / Ms. LAST NAME],

Thanks for responding to my initial inquiry regarding your participation in my research project at North Carolina State University which will be in fulfillment of my doctoral degree. I appreciate your consideration of this project and I am very thankful for your time.

As a reminder, I will conduct your interview (Day, Date, Time) at an agreed upon location in the Triangle area. This will require you to take part in a 90-120 minute oral interview. This study will investigate your experience at Southern Area University as a member of the Lumbee Indian community. As such, I invite you to bring items such as photos or mementos that remind you of significant experiences during your four years at the university. You were selected for this project based upon meeting specific research participant criteria which includes having recently graduated from Southern Area University and self-identifying as a member of the Lumbee tribe.

Please note the attached consent form to this email. After reading the form, feel free to print and bring the completed form to your scheduled interview. If you have additional concerns or questions regarding the form, please let me know. I can also discuss additional questions or concerns on the day of your interview.

I look forward to seeing you soon. If you have any questions beforehand or during this process, please feel free to email me at collinsm@email.unc.edu or give me a call at 919-219-0667.

Sincerely,

Marcus L. Collins
NCSU, Doctoral Student

Dear [Mr. / Ms. LAST NAME],

Thanks once again for your participation in this important research project regarding the experience of Lumbee Indian students in higher education.

At this time I have a formal transcript from our interview time together. I would like to share the details with you regarding the transcript and also make sure that I have what you believe is an accurate account of the information you shared with me during that time.

Please reply and let me know your general availability over the next few days (weeks) so that we can discuss this further. It would be helpful if we can do this in person, so I am willing to come to you for convenience if needed and you prefer.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions beforehand or during this process, please feel free to email me at collinsm@email.unc.edu or give me a call at 919-219-0667.

Sincerely,

Marcus L. Collins
NCSU, Doctoral Student

Appendix D: Interview Guide (Version 1)

1. Share with me the story of how you came to the decision to attend Southern Area University?
2. I see you brought along some interesting items with you today for our discussion. Can you share the story behind these items and what they represent? (If applicable)
3. Stage One: Initial Alienation
 - a. What was your experience like when you first arrived at the university?
 - b. How did you settle in to your new community at the university?
 - c. How did you feel when you initially arrived at the university?
 - d. Can you please tell me some examples of things that went well for you, or challenges you faced during this time?
 - e. How did you handle these challenges?
4. Stage Two: Self-Discovery
 - a. What does it mean to be an American Indian student on this campus?
 - b. How does your Indianness and sense of being help or hinder your college experience?
5. Stage Three: Realignment
 - a. What did your campus involvement look like when you first arrived compared to now?
 - b. How do you maintain your Indianness while attending a predominantly white university?
6. Stage Four: Participation
 - a. How do you feel about your goals you set when you came to college?
 - b. How has your culture and community, both inside and outside the university, helped you achieve success?
 - c. What do you find as sources of inspiration and motivation on and off campus?
 - d. What are your sources of support academically, personally, socially and emotionally? How do these sources provide that support? What does that look like?
 - e. Tell me about the things you participated in while in college.
 - f. What were some of your favorite things about college?
 - g. What types of activities did you avoid and why?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E: Interview Guide (Version 2)

1. Share with me the story of how you came to the decision to attend UNC Chapel Hill?
2. I see you brought along some interesting items with you today for our discussion. Can you share the story behind these items and what they represent? (If applicable)
3. Stage One: Initial Alienation
 - a. When you think back to your arrival at UNC Chapel Hill, what was your first impression? Share with me what you observed as similarities and differences between your home community and that of the university? Can you share any specific stories which demonstrate or serve as examples of what it was like when you arrived?
 - b. How did you settle in to your new community at the university? What things, groups, people, etc. were important for you as you found your way at the university? How was your home community (as you define home/community) important in this transition? Can you share some specific examples which demonstrate how you settled into your new campus community?
 - c. Can you please tell me some examples of things that went well for you during your first semester, year or what you would consider your transition time? Were there any challenges you faced during this time? Share with me some examples of these instances or share stories about things that went well or were challenging?
4. Stage Two: Self-Discovery
 - a. What did it mean for you to be an American Indian student on this campus?
 - b. How did your Lumbee identity help or hinder your college experience? Do you feel that being Lumbee offered you any advantages? Disadvantages? What beliefs or values were you taught which helped you be successful at the university?
 - c. When you think about your college experience, how would you describe your similarities and/or differences to other students? Can you share with me any stories of when you came to this understanding and describe what that was like?
5. Stage Three: Realignment
 - a. What did your campus involvement look like when you first arrived? As you think about your involvement during your four years, how did your involvement on campus look similar and/or different from the first year, to the second, third, etc.? Do you feel your being Lumbee influenced your campus involvement decisions, and if so, how?
 - b. How do you maintain your identity as Lumbee while attending a predominantly white university?
 - c. Often times in Indian Country we talk about walking in two worlds which is usually referencing being Indian or Native and then adopting ways of

majority culture. Please respond to this assertion. Do you agree or disagree?
[Prompt: if you agree, can you share an example from your time in undergrad?]

6. Stage Four: Participation
 - a. How did you feel about your goals you set when you came to college compared to when you graduated? How did they change or stay the same? What influence do you feel your culture may have had on these goals?
 - b. How has your culture and community, both inside and outside the university, helped you achieve success?
 - c. What did you find as sources of inspiration and motivation on and off campus?
 - d. What were your sources of support academically, personally, socially and emotionally? How do these sources provide that support? What does that look like?
 - e. What were some of your favorite things about college?
 - f. Reflecting back to when you graduated, let's say you have to give a graduation speech where you share a story about your best college experience, what would you say? Would you provide any acknowledgement and if so who or what would you recognize and why?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?