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Campus Climate At A Predominantly White Institution: A Narrative Study Of Minority Students' Experiences

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CAMPUS CLIMATE AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION: A NARRATIVE
STUDY OF MINORITY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

by

Rebecca Folkman Gleditsch
Master of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2015

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
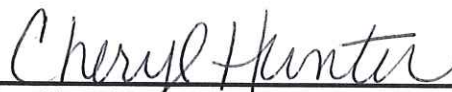

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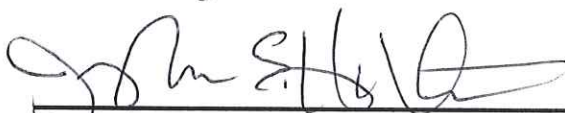
This dissertation, submitted by Rebecca Folkman Gleditsch in partial fulfillment of the requirements of for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Dr. Cheryl Hunter, Chairperson

Dr. Josh Hunter

Dr. Aimee Rogers

Dr. Elizabeth Legerski

This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

Dr. Chris Nelson
Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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Date

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ABSTRACT

At the same time as the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States have seen an increased change over the past decades, institutions of higher education have experienced an increase in the percentage of minority students. The majority of minority students attend Predominantly White Institutions where they have fewer peers and faculty with similar backgrounds as compared to students who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities. We know that there are tremendous benefits of higher education, such as fewer health problems, longer life expectancy, better economic well-being, and higher likelihood of being employed. As the value of having a college degree increases, minority students are less likely than their White peers to graduate from college, which makes it important to understand their experiences in higher education. The aim of this study is to explore how racial minority students experience campus climates when attending Predominantly White Institutions. This research provides a qualitative analysis of the campus climate at a PWI in the Midwest. The study explores the experiences of racial minority students using a narrative approach, which allows us to hear the stories as told by the students, a voice that is often left out in the dominant discourse surrounding PWIs. Stories from students identifying as Asian American, Black, Latina/o, and Native American highlighted a range of experiences of the campus climate, university setting, and community environment. Some of their experiences included being met with racism on campus, bias from community members and peers, support from student organizations, and mentoring opportunities from professors. The

stories forms suggestions for change and new policies that Predominantly White Institutions across the country can benefit from.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The racial and ethnic demographics of the United States' population have seen an increased change over the past decades (Center for Public Education, 2016) and 2014 marked the year when the majority of children 5 years and younger were racial or ethnic minorities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). At the same time, institutions of higher education across the country have experienced an increase in the percentage of minority students. Since the 1950s and the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education,* where school segregation was ruled unconstitutional, the racial climate of schools in the United States has gradually changed. Although many of these institutions do show a higher racial integration than before, there continues to be substantially more Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) compared to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HIS), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU). This poses several important areas that need to be explored, one of them being how racial minority students experience being students at the university and college level.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013), 11% of all Black college students attended a HBCU in 2007. At HIS, which are "an institution in which Hispanics represent 25% or more of the full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment" (NCES, 2013, p. 130), 50% of all Latina/o college students attend such a school. When looking at Tribally Controlled Institutions, only seven percent of American Indian and Alaska Native College students attend a Tribal College (NCES, 2013). Thus, when almost nine out of ten Black college students, one out of two Latina/o college students, and more than nine out of ten Native American college students attend colleges and universities that do not have a large percentage of

students of their own race, it is critical to explore their experiences and examine whether minority students at such schools have the same opportunities to thrive as their nonminority peers.

When looking at enrollment rates in higher education, the past two decades show an increase in undergraduate enrollment of racial and ethnic minority students (NCES, 2016a). Still, there continues to be a gap between enrollment rates and graduation rates for these students, because, while "…minority students are entering college at a higher rate than in previous years, they continue to leave at a higher rate than nonminorities" (Seidman, 2005b, p. 8). In 2013, the overall graduation rate for students who began their undergraduate degree in 2007 at a four-year institution was 59%. However, this percentage is not the same for all students, and racial and ethnic background continues to be an important variable when looking at graduation rates. For example, Asian American students have the highest graduation rate (71%), and Black and Native American students have the lowest (41%) (NCES, 2016a). This is unfortunately not a new pattern, past studies illustrate that when comparing college enrollment and graduation rates of African American, Latina/o, and Native American students to their White and Asian American peers, the former continues to be underrepresented in higher education (NCES, 2016a) and have lower graduation rates than the latter group of students (Furr & Elling, 2002: Thompson, Goring, Obeidat, & Chen, 2006). In 2013, more White 18-24 year olds enrolled in college (42 percent) compared to their Black and Latina/o peers (34 percent) (NCES, 2016a). Given this background, do racial minority students experience the campus climate at institutions of higher education differently than their nonminority peers?

The benefits of higher education are many, such as fewer health problems and longer life expectancy (Seidman, 2005a). Overall, students who graduate from college are performing better than those who do not graduate "…on virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment" (Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 3). They are more likely to be employed, less likely

to live in poverty, earn almost twice as much as those with only a high-school diploma (NCES, 2016a; Pew Research Center, 2014). Thus, the consequences of having positive experiences when attending higher education have great value beyond the years spent in college.

As the value of having a college degree increases at the same time minority students are less likely than their White peers to graduate from college, it is important to understand the experiences of minority students attending PWIs. This research focuses on the perceptions of minority students among institutions of higher education. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore how racial minority students experience campus climates when attending a Predominantly White Institution, as well as how racial minority students experience the surrounding community environment. In addition, the study explores how visible versus invisible minorities might experience PWI campuses and surrounding community life differently than their White counterparts.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative analysis of the campus climate at a PWI as experienced by its racial minority students. Specifically, a narrative approach will be utilized to enable these students to share their stories. The university explored in this study is a Midwestern research university with a population of approximately 15,000 students. It is of special interest to explore the narratives on this campus as there have been several incidents of racism, discrimination, and prejudice on the campus over the past years. This study will highlight the experiences of racial minority students on the campus, a voice that is often left out in the dominant discourse. Thus, the study will aim to tell the story of the campus as narrated by its racial minority students. This might reveal suggestions for change and new policies that could be

made in order to improve the campus climate at Predominantly White Institutions across the nation.

Problem Statement

The existing research examining racial minority students' experiences at Predominantly White Institutions continues to illustrate that minority students face distinctively different experiences than White students. This is not only reflected in their degree attainment rates and opportunities across campus in areas such as academics, campus activities, and social relationships, but more importantly in their experiences as minority students at PWIs. Most minority students attend PWIs and understanding their experiences can help develop policies, increase retention and graduation rates, and help ensure that all students can succeed.

Key Concepts

The focus of this research is how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution. The experiences of four groups of racial minority students are explored: Asian American, Black, Latina/o, and Native American. The term Predominantly White Institution is used to signify an Institution where the majority of students are White. Two theories will be informing this study, Tinto's Theory of Student Integration (1975) and Bell's Critical Race Theory (CRT). While CRT will provide a lens to explore "…power structures that maintain racial inequities and develop strategies for action and change" (Kolivoski, Weaver, & Constance-Huggins, 2014, p. 269), the Theory of Student Integration will help examine how individual student characteristics (racial minority status) and institutional characteristics of the PWI impact students' experiences.

Conceptual Framework

Past research indicates that minority students attending PWIs might have very different experiences than their White peers. Research shows that the campus culture at PWIs tends to promote norms, values, and practices that serve mainly White students, even if the school also has students of color, race, and ethnicity other than White (Museus, 2011). In addition, racial minority students at PWIs consistently report experiences of being judged based on stereotypes, racism, stigmatization, and hostility from peers (Guzman, Goto, & Wei, 2016; Museus, 2008). This makes it important to understand whether such negative experiences occur at the PWI in this study and how it potentially impacts the racial minority students' experiences.

Social support seems to have an important impact on racial minority students' experiences, as support from faculty, family, or peers can help students cope with unsupportive campus cultures and negative experiences such as racism (e.g., Castillo et al., 2004; Harper, 2015; Robertson et al., 2016; Wang, 2012; Wyche, Frierson Jr, 1990). However, lack of support can contribute to negative experiences and lead to less persistence among minority students attending PWIs (e.g., Castillo et al., 2004; Harper, 2015; Robertson et al., 2016; Wang, 2012; Wyche, Frierson Jr, 1990). These three concepts, campus culture, experiences such as racism, and social support, are important to minority students' experiences at PWIs and therefore also highly important to explore in this study in order to gain a better understanding of how racial minority students experience PWIs.

Although more attention is being focused on minority groups attending higher education there is still limited research exploring their experiences. More specifically, few studies examining racial minority students at PWIs focus on a comparison across more than one or two

minority groups and few are using the narratives of these students to understand their experiences (e.g., Makomenaw, 2012, Museus, 2009; Museus & Maramba, 2011). A part of this project involves a social justice component and an attempt to raise awareness around racial minority students' experiences at PWIs. This study aims at filling the gaps in past research by taking a narrative approach and focusing on the experiences of four racial minority groups: Asian American, Black, Latina/o, and Native American students.

Research questions

This study explores the following research question: what type of stories do racial minority student share when asked about their experiences of the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution? In addition, three sub-questions are explored:

- How do racial minority students experience the surrounding community environment?
- How do racial minority students experience the university setting?
- How might racial minority students' identities be impacted by their experiences of attending a PWI?

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

In Chapter Two, an overview of previous research and literature on the topic will be provided, as well as an outline of the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Three will describe the methodological approach used in the study, including sampling methods and data analysis procedures. In Chapter Four, the results of the data collection and analysis will be presented. Finally, in Chapter Five, a discussion of the implications of the study, limitations, and areas of future research will be provided.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explores how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a

Predominantly White Institution. This chapter begins with a review of the existing research

relating to the research question. First, past literature related to each racial minority group is

reviewed, followed by a section on what previous studies have found when comparing the

experiences of these four groups. The final part of the chapter provides the theoretical framework

that will guide this study.

Why a Predominantly White Institution?

When exploring the experiences of minority students, PWIs are of particular interest

because previous research indicates that minority students attending PWIs might have very

different experiences than their White peers. Research has consistently found that PWIs tend to

foster a campus culture that promotes norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, and practices that serve

mainly White students, even if the school also has students of color, nationality, race, and

ethnicity other than White (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Chang, 2002; Evans & Feagin,

2010; Gusa, 2010). According to Museus (2011), the majority of studies examining campus

culture has found that undergraduate racial and ethnic minority students predominantly have

negative experiences and outcomes when attending PWIs, such as experiences of stigmatization,

isolation, hostility, and marginalization (Evans & Feagin, 2010; Guzman, Goto, & Wei, 2016;

Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000; Museus, 2008). Thus, it is perhaps

not surprising that studies examining sense of belonging among minority students at PWIs have

found that racial minority students "…perceive a less strong sense of belonging on their campuses than do White Caucasian students" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 534).

Campus race relations at PWIs may be of specific interest to administrators and faculty in order to ensure that the campus culture is inclusive of its minority students. However, research indicates that many campuses lack an understanding of the impact of racial issues on campus. In fact, Altbach, Lomotey, and Rivers (2002) found that "…many academic administrators and the faculty, for the most part, see racial issues in isolation, as individual crises to be dealt with on an ad hoc basis, rather than as a nexus of issues requiring careful analysis" (p. 25). This lack of understanding of campus culture and racial relations is also true for many White students who "…do not grasp the seriousness of the situation, nor do they recognize the feelings and reactions of underrepresented students" (Altbach et al., 2002, p. 31). Thus, if racial minority students at PWIs experience racism or other forms of discrimination, they may have difficulties seeking help from the administrators at the institutions they attend, followed by additional challenges from the overall campus climate.

At the same time as racial minority students are attending colleges where they are likely to interact with both peers and faculty who lack an overall understanding of their situation, they are also college students in a time period marked by substantial change. Today, most universities and colleges across the country have intensified their diversity missions (Williams & Clowney, 2007; Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). However, despite such efforts, past research has questioned the seriousness of these diversity missions, such as the universities true commitment to diversity and multiculturalism (Jayakumar & Musesus, 2012), arguing that many of the promises are superficial, or so-called "token initiatives," which therefore will not lead to increased inclusion of their minority students (Bensimon, 2005; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005). As a result, PWIs that

do not follow-up their diversity mission, such as failing to meet set goals of increasing diversity among faculty, students and educational programs, will be less able "…to foster environments where underrepresented students of color can thrive" (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012, p. 2). This might lead to more negative perceptions of the campus climate for racial minority students attending a college where most students are White.

Thus, in the face of racial minority students' differing experiences from their White-peers, lack of understanding of campus culture and racial issues from administrators and faculty, it becomes important to explore the experiences of minority students at Predominantly White Institutions. This chapter will provide an overview of previous literature and explore the existing research on minority students' experiences of the campus climate at PWIs. More specifically, the chapter will focus on four racial minority groups: Black, Native American, Latina/o, and Asian American students at PWIs. After examining what previous research has found when studying the experiences of these racial minority students, a comparison will also be made across the groups exploring what these minority groups have in common when attending PWIs. Lastly, the chapter provides an outline of the theoretical framework for this study.

Racial Minority Students and Predominantly White Institutions

Past research has found both similarities and differences in how racial minority students experience the campus climate at Predominantly White Institutions. However, as most of the research looking at racial minority students at PWIs explores one or two racial groups, each minority group is first discussed separately before a discussion on their common experiences if offered.

Asian American Students.

Little research exists on Asian American students' experiences in higher education (Museus & Maramba, 2011) and in a review of the existing literature, Museus (2009) found that only around 1% of the publications in the five most read peer-reviewed journals in higher education focused on Asian American students. Among what exists, past studies indicate that Asian American students' experiences are impacted by cultural challenges such as pressure to assimilate into the dominant campus culture (Lewis et al., 2000; Museus & Maramba, 2011) and feeling excluded from their White peers' social networks on campus (Lewis et al., 2000). Additionally, Asian Americans at PWIs have been found to experience stigmatization, which negatively impacts both their academic motivation and mental health (Guzman et al., 2016). Among the positive experiences at PWIs, Asian American students tend to indicate that the availability of student organizations for Asian American students positively impacts their experiences at PWIs (Chang, 2002; Museus, 2008), providing them with "…critical venues of cultural familiarity, vehicles for cultural expression, and advocacy, and sources of cultural validation for participants" (Museus, 2008, p. 568).

The lack of research related to Asian American students' experiences at PWIs is problematic because this group of minority students tends to be viewed as "…a monolithic group that achieves universal academic and occupational success" (Museus & Maramba, 2011, p. 232). As mentioned previously, Asian American students continue to excel in higher education. As a group they are often seen as the "model minority" (Chang & Kian, 2002; Lee & Zhou, 2015) and their graduation rates are the highest when compared to their White, Black, Latina/o, and Native American peers (NCES, 2016a). However, research illustrates that Asian Americans, as a minority group, do not perform at the same rates when attending institutions of higher education (Lee & Zhou, 2015), in fact, this minority group is vastly diverse when examining their

likelihood of attaining a college degree. When looking at Asian Americans 25 years and older living in the United States, Asian Indian (70%), Pakistani (55.7%), Korean (53%), and Chinese (51%) are more likely to hold a college degree compared to Vietnamese (26%), Cambodian (14%), Hmong (13.4%), and Laotian (12.6%) (Pew Research Center, 2013). Thus, Asian American students in higher education face racial stereotypes and assumptions regarding their educational achievement and at the same time they experience vastly different realities when attending universities. Therefore, Asian American students' experiences when attending PWIs are central in this study and it is of special interest to examine whether their experiences differ by racial and ethnic background.

Black Students.

Among the research on racial and ethnic minority students' experiences at Predominately White Institutions, the overwhelming majority of the work explores the experiences of African American or Black students. It should be noted that previous research has been in doubt as to whether the term Black should be avoided in order to highlight important differences among individual ethnic subpopulations who identify as Black (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005). However, it has also been found to be a central term in studies of racism (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005). Furthermore, because the term African American is more appropriate for describing individuals from a specific African subpopulation or individuals who have ancestors from Africa (Bhopal, 2004), the term Black will be used to describe all students that identify as being either African American or Black.

In the existing research examining Black students attending PWIs, social and environmental factors, such as being involved on campus, have been found to play a critical role in their retention and success (Brooks & Allen, 2016; Furr & Elling, 2002). Campus climate has

enormous impact on student well-being, especially for minority students at Predominantly White Institutions (Love, 2009). Black students report feeling negative campus climates, such as experiences of isolation and feeling unwelcome (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Love, 2009) and they face more negative experiences, such as exclusion from activities and lack of opportunities for academic networking, than other minority groups (Ancis et al., 2000; Guiffrida, 2005). Additionally, Black students report being prejudged and stigmatized based on stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Guiffrida, 2003; Hannon, Woodside, Pollard, & Roman, 2016; Harper, 2015; Soloranzo, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), which contributes to a "…pressure to prove that they are academically capable and to dispel myths and stereotypes about the Black community" (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007, p. 520).

Most students benefit from being involved on campus, and one particularly important part of this involvement is a sense of belonging (Creighton, 2007; Tinto, 2012; Hunn, 2014). For both Black and White first-year college students, feeling that they belong on campus has been found to be significantly associated with a commitment to the university they attend (Hausman, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). Thus, the likelihood of staying in college for both minority and majority students is greater when they are involved on campus and feel that they belong (Hausman et al., 2007). Moreover, feeling that they belong on campus has been found to positively influence the academic adjustment of minority students and further increase retention rates of this group of students (Baber, 2012; Hurtado et al., 2007). Both relationships with White peers (McDonald & Vrana, 2007) and faculty (Borum & Walker, 2012; Guiffrida, 2005; Sinanan, 2016) have been found to positively influence Black students' satisfaction as students, increasing their social comfort (McDonald & Vrana, 2007) and academic outcomes (Sinanan, 2016).

In addition to a sense of belonging on campus, research also indicates minority students benefit from relationships outside the university, such as in the overall community and religious

institutions (Brooks & Allen, 2016). For example, Black students have been found to use prayer and attend religious services in difficult times as coping mechanisms that contribute to their academic persistence (Brooks and Allen, 2016). Furthermore, Black students attending PWIs have been found to benefit from opportunities to participate in the Black community outside of campus as it gives "…them opportunities to collectively give back to the Black community" (Guiffrida, 2003, p. 315). Black students attending PWIs have also talked about the importance of attending a PWI as it will prepare them for a life after graduation when they will be "…entering a 'real world' that is primarily White" (Hannon et al., 2016, p. 663).

Latina/o Students.

When describing the experiences of students such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, and South Americans, several terms have been used in past research such as Hispanic (Laird, Birdges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007; Onorato & Musoba, 2015) and Latina/o (e.g., Castellanos, 2016; Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Crisp, Taggat, & Nora, 2015). Although these two terms are used interchangeably (Bhopal, 2004), Hispanic often refers to the Spanish-speaking population, whereas Latino/a is broader term and includes all individuals of Latin American descent (Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, 1987). In this study, Latina/o will be used to refer to this population, consistent with previous research which has marked a change of preference to using this term (Hurtado, 2002).

The majority of Latina/o college students in the United State attend PWIs (Gonzales, 2010), which makes their experiences particularly significant when looking at PWIs. However, Latina/o students continue to face negative experiences at PWIs, such as being "…stereotyped as under qualified and lacking intelligence" (Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2016, p. 716), as well as isolation, racism, and discrimination (Robertson et al., 2016). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising

that Latina/o students attending PWIs have been found to face more difficulties succeeding and staying in college as "…the dominant White cultural representations communicated the message that a Chicano presence in a predominantly White university was something that was not important, valued, or does not belong" (Gonzales, 2003, p. 214).

However, being able to connect with other ethnic minority students (Cerezo & Chang, 2013) and faculty of color (Gonzales, 2002; Robertson et al., 2016), support from family (Castillo et al., 2004), as well as involvement in student organizations (Castellanos, 2016; McLure, 2006) have been found to positively influence their academic success at PWIs. In addition, research indicates that Latina/o students who are familiar and comfortable with White American Culture experience less negative stress (Castillo et al., 2004) and are more likely to stay at PWIs (Ojeda et al., 2014).

Native American Students.

The literature exploring Native American students' experiences at PWIs is scarce, which is especially interesting because of the low rates of Native Americans graduating from PWIs. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 1% of all bachelor degrees earned in the United States in 2012-2013 were conferred to American Indian and Alaska Native students (NCES, 2016b). This is a consistent pattern, as the past 10 years shows that less than 1% of undergraduate degrees have been earned by Native Americans (US Department of Education, 2013).

Among the research that exists, much of it explores the experiences of Native Americans who have transferred from a Tribal College or University to attend a PWI (Makomenaw, 2012). For this student population, support from family, spiritual resources, and relationships with faculty tend to increase their persistence of staying in college (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003),

while experiences of racism, discrimination, stereotypes, and being different from the majority culture on campus increases their negative experiences at PWIs (Jackson et al., 2003; Makomenaw, 2012; Pewewardy & Frey, 2003). In addition, being able to develop relationships with peer mentors has been found to positively influence the experiences of Native American college students' experiences at PWIs, providing them with connections to the community, support, and guidance (Shotton, Oosahwe, & Citrón, 2007).

However, Native American students continue to face difficulties when attending PWIs. For example, Guillory and Wolverton (2008) studied Native Americans at Predominantly White Institutions, finding that there continues to be a "…cultural discontinuity between these 'two worlds' (Native American worldview and the mainstream worldview)" (p. 84) and that the "…institutions did not fully understand the Native American student mindset, and, as a consequence, they failed to adequately meet their specific needs" (p. 84). Interestingly, this is also consistent with research examining faculty members' attitudes towards minority students. A problem among faculty has been that they lack knowledge about how to handle race-related discussions with their students (Valentine, Prentice, Torres, & Arellano, 2012) and even professors with many years of teaching experience "…are anxious about and ill prepared to productively and successfully facilitate difficult dialogues on race in classrooms" (Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, & Lin, 2009, p. 1108). White faculty members, in particular, have been found to be "unsure what role they can play in making their campuses places where American racial minority students want, and are able, to learn" (Gordon, 2007, p. 337). Thus, it becomes essential to explore whether the gap between Native American students' needs and faculty's lack of ability to meet these needs, is a consistent experience of Native American students attending Predominantly White Institutions.

Intersectionality.

The experiences of a minority student attending a Predominantly White Institution is not only influenced by his or her race, but also by different aspects of their identities such as gender, sexuality, age, religion, and culture. As defined by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016), building upon the work of Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality is

> …a way of understanding and analyzing complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. (p. 2).

Minority students' lived experiences are multi-dimensional and complex and one needs to understand more than just a single aspect of their identity, such as their race, in order to explain their experiences (Hankivsky, 2014). When exploring a social issue, such as minority students experiences at a PWI, the aspects of a person's identity and their importance can't be determined until the student shares his or her experiences, they need to be "discovered in the process of investigation" (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 3).

Common for all Minority Students attending PWIs.

As campuses across the nation have become more diverse, campus racial climate has developed into a widely discussed topic (Reid & Radhakrishnan 2003; Ward & Zarate 2015). Recent news articles about student protests and demands for a range of issues such as a president's resignation for failure to respond to racist incidents on campus, suspending a

professor for writing a racist article, and expanding diversity programs (e.g., Jaschik 2015; Haidt & Jussim, 2016), as well as previous research (e.g., Reid and Radhakrishnan 2003; Cole 2007), illustrate how minority students continue to say that their colleges and universities do not do enough to help support diversity.

Campus Setting. An important aspect of any student`s college experience are the services provided by the university outside of class. Much research on minority students' retention rates argues that colleges have the ability to build a more "…pluralistic environment by promoting diversity and multiculturalism through special programming and activities" (Swail, 2003, p. 109). Especially important for minority students are spaces on campus that provide services for them, such as multicultural centers (Seidman, 2005b). In his discussion on multicultural centers, Seidman (2005b) argues that "…multicultural centers are another technique being employed to provide a safety net for minority students by providing a specific office—a point of contact to go in time of need, where a plethora of services are collected and provided to needy students" (p. 19). Thus, campuses should provide places where students can seek help when they have problems they are dealing with or have other issues they would like to discuss. However, the key is not only to offer such places, but also to promote the existence of such places and their services to make sure all students are aware of them and know how and where to access the center.

In addition to multicultural centers, student groups and clubs are also places where students meet friends and get involved on campus. Because the majority of students on colleges and universities today are White, many of these groups are often focused more directly at these students (Seidman, 2005a). Thus, having "…student groups and clubs for specific minority groups offers critical mass whereby ethnic students can sustain their cultural heritage and share it with like-minded students—all features that some literature findings suggest will help with the

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retention of such groups" (Seidman, 2005b, p. 19). Among the studies examining racial minority students' experiences at Predominantly White Institutions, the research consistently highlights the importance of student organizations for minority students attending PWIs. This is true for Asian American (Museus, 2008), Black students (e.g., Greyerbiehl & Mitchell Jr., 2014; Guiffrida, 2003; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010), Latina/o students (Castellanos, 2016; Garcia, Huerta, Ramirez, & Patrón, 2017; Robertson et al., 2016), and Native American students (Shotton et al., 2007; Yurkovich, 2001). Studies have indicated that one of the main reasons why student organizations are important for minority students' experiences, is because they "…assist students of color in bridging the cultural gap that exists between their home environment and the environment at PWIs" (Guiffrida, Kiyama, Waterman, & Museus, 2012, p. 76). Student organizations have also been found to provide minority students with a counter-space to negative experiences at PWIs (Harper, 2015; Robertson et al., 2016), providing them with social support such as sense of belonging (Castellanos, 2016; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Hannon et al., 2016), access to resources and information (Castellanos, 2016), cultural familiarity, expression, and validation (Castellanos, 2016; Guiffrida, 2003; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010), identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Lewis & McKissic, 2010) as well as opportunities for leadership development (Garcia et al., 2017; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell Jr., 2014).

In addition to student organizations, interactions with faculty are also an important part of students' well-being and their perception of campus. Previous studies over the last decades have consistently highlighted the importance of having a diverse faculty body for minority students' success (e.g., Guiffrida, 2005; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Love 2009). Furthermore, research have often emphasized the importance of having mentors for student success (Wang, 2012; Wyche, Frierson Jr, 1990) and regular interactions with faculty outside the classroom for retention rates (Love, 2009). Unfortunately, statistics from the U.S. Department of Education show that although

the student population has become more diverse over the past decades, the majority of faculty members in the United States continue to be native-born White (2016). In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 76 percent "…of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions" are White (NCES, 2013). In light of the importance of mentorship opportunities with faculty of similar ethnic and race background, the gap in diversity between faculty and students creates barriers to school success for minority students that White students do not necessarily experience when attending Predominantly White Institutions.

Mentors. Mentoring has been found to have several important effects on student retention at the university level (Seidman, 2005a). In fact, mentoring can help students reduce feelings of isolation and alienation, as well as providing them with a support system they might not find elsewhere (Hunn, 2014). Although mentors for students of all backgrounds are important, it might be especially important for minority students as they are more likely to be first-generation college students (Cushman, 2007). As defined by the U.S. Department of Education (2018), first generation students are "…students enrolled in postsecondary education whose parents had not attended college" (p. 1). These students might need more help navigating and understanding the university system when they first enter college. Research also indicates that informal mentoring can provide minority students with opportunities for building relationships with faculty and positively influence their retention rates (Hunn, 2014).

Much of the research on retention rates emphasizes that students of color have been found to seek out such mentoring opportunities with faculty who are similar to them in a wide range of areas such as appearance and life experiences, and that are able to understand them and provide information about university aspects such as politics and culture (Bertrand Jones, Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Calafell, 2007; Hunn, 2014; Schwartz, 2012). Unfortunately, as the

faculty workforce continues to be predominantly White, this means that many minority students might lack the opportunity to create mentoring relationships with faculty members who are similar to them. However, a recent study on Latina/o students' retention rates found that students also create and benefit from "…good relationships with faculty who were not of color" (Robertson et al., 2016, p. 730). Thus, although having diverse faculty has an important impact on minority students and their ability to connect with faculty of similar backgrounds, it might be even more important for minority students at PWIs to meet faculty that are open to help and create good faculty-student relationships, regardless of background or skin color.

Invisible versus Visible Minority Students. As illustrated by the reviewed research, although Predominantly White Institutions in the United States tend to serve more diverse student populations than ever before, minority students continue to face distinctively different experiences than White students. This is not only reflected in their degree attainment rates and opportunities across campus in areas such as academics, campus activities, and social relationships, but more importantly in their experiences as minority students at PWIs. Among the purposes of the paper, two parts have not been discussed extensively; invisible versus visible minority students' experiences and how minority students experience the surrounding community life.

When looking at studies that have examined differences between visible and invisible racial minority students (for example, lighter skinned versus darker skinned Black students), the literature is limited. The term "invisible minority" seems to be used predominantly in research looking at LGBTQ students' experiences in higher education (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Lapinski & Sexton, 2014; Lopez & Chism, 1993). In addition, Dr. Samuel Museus and his colleagues have consistently used this term when describing how much of the existing research on Asian

Americans in higher education tends to generalize and reflect the experiences of those who do exceptionally well and therefore overlooks the (invisible) experiences of Asian American students who perform at other levels (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Museus & Park; Museus, Shiroma, & Dizon, 2016). Thus, this leaves an important gap in the research examining racial minority students attending PWIs that future research should seek to explore.

Minority students and the surrounding community life. When examining whether racial minority students experience the surrounding community life differently than their White peers, the literature is scarce and few studies seems to have focused on this. The limited research exploring racial minority students' relationship to the surrounding community has found that Black students attending Predominantly White Institutions tend to benefit from being able to attend religious services outside of campus (Brooks & Allen, 2016) and having opportunities to participate and contribute to the Black community outside of campus (Guiffrida, 2003). Thus, it may be of importance to explore whether these patterns are true for other racial minority groups attending PWIs, especially those attending schools where the surrounding community life is predominantly White.

Theoretical Framework

Among the past research examining racial minority students attending Predominantly White Institutions, a variety of different theoretical frameworks have been used to explain minority students' experiences. Examples of theories that have been used in past research are theories such as: Allport's (1954) Contact Theory (Chavous, 2005), the Multidimensional Model

of Racial Identity (Baber, 2012), Black Feminist Theory (Shavers & Moore, 2014), Situational Constraint Theory (Reeder & Schmitt, 2013), Organizational Learning Theory (Bensimon, 2005), Anticipatory Socialization Theory (Chang, Cerna, Han, & Saenz, 2008), and Social Identity Theory (Hurtado, Alvarado, Guillermo-Wann, 2015). Consequently, there is great variety among the theories that past research has utilized to explore how the identities of racial minority students' may be impacted by their experiences of attending a PWI. Nevertheless, when looking at past research, the majority of studies tend to use Tinto's (1975) Theory of Student Integration (e.g., Guiffrida, 2003; McLure, 2006; Wei et al., 2011) or Critical Race Theory (e.g., Gusa, 2010; Johnson et al., 2007; Robertson et al., 2016; Sinnan, 2016; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Tuitt, 2012). These two theories will also be informing the present study. First, a discussion on Tinto's Student Integration Theory will be provided, followed by a discussion of Bell's Critical Race Theory. Lastly, the two theories will be discussed in relation to the present study.

Student Integration Theory.

The first theory utilized in this study is Vincent Tinto's Theory of Student Integration (1975), which draws upon Durkheim's work on suicide when explaining why students leave college. Examining the existing research at the time, Tinto attempted to create a theoretical model of dropout from institutions of higher education "…that specifies the conditions under which varying types of dropout occur" (Tinto, 1975, p. 92). The model takes into account both individual and institutional characteristics, arguing that the decision of leaving college is based upon goal commitment (academic integration such as grades and intellectual development) and institutional commitment (social integration such as peer and faculty interactions) (Tinto, 1975, p. 95). The underlying assumption of this theory is that students enter college with a variety of

different backgrounds and experiences that directly and indirectly influence their success in college. Even more important, according to Tinto (1975), is that "…these background characteristics and individual attributes also influence the development of the educational expectations and commitments the individual brings with him to the college environment" (p. 96). It is the interplay between the student's goal commitment and institutional commitment that will predict his or her level of satisfaction with the college and likelihood of leaving. The better a student's background and experiences before college align with the expectations of the college, the easier it is for the student to integrate into the college culture (academically and socially) and therefore be more satisfied with the school.

In the research on students in higher education, Tinto's Theory of Student Integration was one of the most widely cited theories for more than three decades (Bensimon, 2005; Guiffrida, 2006; Johnson et al., 2007; Museus, Yi, Saelua, 2017). However, in more recent years, there seems to have been a shift away from using this theory; many recent studies critique the use of Tinto's theory when looking at minority students in institutions of higher education (e.g., Bensimon, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Maldonado et al., 2005; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Museus et al., 2017). One of the most significant critiques related to using this theoretical framework, when examining racial minority students, is the underlying cultural bias in the notion that students with different backgrounds and experiences than the dominant college culture will need to assimilate into the mainstream culture (Guiffrida, 2006; Museus, 2008, 2011; Museus et al., 2016). Consequently, this theoretical framework would argue that students who differ significantly from the dominant college culture, such as minority students attending Predominantly White Institutions, will not become integrated and successful unless they are able to break away from their own cultures and adopt the values and norms of the dominant culture.

Thus, for racial minority students, such as Asian American, Black, Latina/o, and Native American students, their experiences and likelihood of success when attending PWIs depends on their ability to successfully integrate into the White culture and not on the university's ability to help them succeed. Despite the critiques the theory has received, in this study Tinto's theory will help highlight how individual student characteristics (racial minority status) and the institutional characteristics of the PWIs shape the students' experiences. This will be an important lens that can help the study gain a deeper understanding of how the PWI in the study met (or failed to meet) the needs of its minority students. The underlying premise of the theory, that students need to integrate and adjust to the dominant (White) culture, can help reveal how the PWI should implement changes or new policies in order to improve the experiences of its racial minority students without forcing them to integrate to the dominant culture.

Critical Race Theory.

The second theory that will be utilized in this study has previously been used by a variety of researchers examining minority students' experiences at Predominantly White Institutions (e.g., Gusa, 2010; Robertson et al., 2016; Sinnan, 2016; Soloranzo et al., 2000; Tuitt, 2012) is Bell's Critical Race Theory (CRT). The theory is a very efficient lens when examining racial minority students' experiences when attending PWIs and "…provides a framework for examining power structures that maintain racial inequities and developing strategies for action and change" (Kolivoski, Weaver, & Constance-Huggins, 2014, p. 269).

Critical Race Theory can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement and emerged in the 1980s as a result of the legal work of law Professors like Dr. Derrick Bell, who is considered one of the main founders of the theory (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Although the 1954 Brown

decision and the following Civil Rights Act from 1964 directly targeted institutionalized racism and segregation in the United States (e.g., Wallenstein, 2008; Wiggins, 1966), the 1970s was marked by hostility and slow progress in regard to these legal policies (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). In the 1980s, several law professors, including as Bell, sought to develop "...a legal research agenda that focused on the effect of race and racism" (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 5). These scholars had realized that research was needed on new methods for understanding how racism continued to shape various parts of society. Therefore, Bell and his colleagues focused on race and racism as "...the center of scholarship and analysis by focusing on such issues as affirmative action, racial districting, campus speech codes, and the disproportionate sentencing of People of Color in the U.S. criminal justice system" (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 5). Their work lead to the development of Critical Race Theory and today the theory is widely used in a variety of research areas, including education.

Critical Race Theory is "...a paradigm grounded in race awareness and an intention to achieve racial justice" (Babbie, 2013, p. 39). The underlying assumption is that race is a social construct (Gregory & Sanjek, 1994) and that social theory is built on the dominant White perspective and therefore overlooks the unique experiences of minority groups (Babbie, 2013). CRT takes into account "...economical, historical, social, and group context" (Coello, Casanas, Rocco, & Parsons, 2003, p. 39) and questions and challenges the dominant (White) perspective (Gusa, 2010).

The assumptions of the theory have been widely discussed (e.g., Gusa, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Robertson et al., 2016) and a common argument is that CRT is useful for studying issues related to inequality, racism, discrimination, and other forms of unfair treatment within institutions of higher education. Critical Race Theory is perhaps particularly suitable when "...investigating problems encountered by marginalized

groups in a diverse society" (Robertson et al., 2016, p. 717) because it views racial privilege as a structured practice that produces and preserves racial inequality through the preference of Whiteness (Gusa, 2010; Pierce, 2003).

Thus, when exploring the experiences of racial minorities attending Predominantly White Institutions, CRT will enable the researcher to examine "…issues of race, inequality, and unfair treatment within educational settings" (Robertson et al., 2016, p. 717). For example, Aguirre (2010) argues that

> …one innovative feature of Critical Race Theory is the use of narratives or counter stories to give voice to minority persons. By introducing their lived experience into discourses about social processes and institutional practices, minority persons challenge the dominant social reality; that is, the "stock story" the dominant group uses to justify its alter ego. (p. 763)

Consequently, Critical Race Theory will be utilized to help enable the racial minority students' experiences to be told, as well as challenge the dominant cultures and discourses at Predominantly White Institutions. CRT will provide a framework for understanding how racial minority students' experiences are shaped by the dominant population and discourse on campus. This could. for example, reveal if there are specific power structures at the institution that maintain racial biases and hinders the positive experiences of racial minority students on campus.

In conclusion, two theories will be informing this study. Tinto's Theory of Student Integration will help highlight how the narratives of racial minority students are impacted by the relationship between individual student characteristics (racial minority status) and the institutional characteristics of the PWI. Bell's Critical Race Theory, on the other hand, will focus more specifically on how potential systematic issues such as racism and power structures impact the students' narratives. Put together, these two theories will help provide a theoretical

framework that will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the racial

minority students in this study experience the campus climate at the PWI. Furthermore, the goal

of using these two theories is to highlight any issues that hinder the positive experiences of racial

minority students at the PWI, both institutional characteristics and power structures. If the

narratives of the students reveal such issues, their stories can be used to create suggestions for

change and new policies that the PWI can implement to improve the experiences of all students at

the institution.

Conclusion

After exploring the research on racial minority students who attend Predominantly White

Institutions, little doubt is left to the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of racial

background, thrive and succeed when they choose to attend an institution of higher education that

is predominantly White. As most universities and colleges across the country have intensified

their diversity missions (Wilson et al., 2012; Williams & Clowney, 2007), it becomes of great

importance to understand the experiences of minority students attending PWIs and whether the

universities are able to ensure that all of their students can succeed. The reviewed literature

indicates that PWIs need to closely evaluate the academic and overall campus opportunities for

minority students. Perhaps more importantly, it illustrates the crucial importance of examining

campus climates at PWIs in order to help them truly commit to diversity and multiculturalism,

which further will enable these institutions to promote campus environments where

underrepresented students of color can grow and succeed (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012).

As a final note, it is vital to remember that a student's well-being not only depends on a

positive campus climate, good grades, or a supportive community on and outside campus. It is

the holistic experience as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution, in which all of these components interact and produce the likelihood of positive experiences as a student. Thus, exploring how racial minority students experience campus climates when attending PWIs, as well as how they experience the surrounding community environment, is important in order to 1) understand their experiences and 2) help PWIs foster a campus culture that promotes the well-being of all their students. If the goal of a university is to provide its students with an education, it is vital that the institutions ensure that all students admitted, regardless of racial background, can succeed and reach graduation. In order to do so, colleges and universities should focus on the needs of all students and remember that the resources spent on increasing the positive experiences of the students who needs it the most will benefit all students.

Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter

This chapter explored what past research has found when examining racial minority students attending Predominantly White Institutions. In addition, the chapter summarized the two theories that will provide the theoretical framework for this study, Tinto's Theory of Student Retention and Bell's Critical Race Theory. In Chapter Three, the methodological approach used in this study will be described, as well as information about the methods for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The present study seeks to understand how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). As previously mentioned, part of this project involves a social justice component and an attempt to raise awareness around racial minority students' experiences at PWIs. The aim of this chapter is to examine how the use of narrative methodology shaped this study as compared to other methodologies. The chapter will also explore the potential of several other qualitative methodologies as compared to a narrative approach. Additionally, the chapter will seek to address potential advantages of using a narrative methodology and analysis.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a broad research approach that can take many forms ranging from ethnography to case study. What characterizes narrative research is the use of a person`s biography that "…revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them" (Chase, 2011, p. 421). Narrative as a form of storytelling is not a new concept, rather it has been the primary method for preserving and sharing stories between individuals through time. As humans, we have the ability to use symbols and metaphors to create stories that involve both others and ourselves, aiming to create and maintain "…a sense of community through retelling and re-visioning stories" (Block & Weatherford, 2013 p. 498). Ordinary storytelling, according to Schegloff (1997), is a form of "…coconstruction, an interactional achievement, a joint production, a collaboration" (p. 97). Narrative inquiry builds on the idea of what Schegloff

(1997) terms ordinary storytelling; it is a type of research that puts the personal story in the center of a study to create a more holistic and embodied story (Glesne, 2016).

Methodology

As argued by Block and Weatherford (2013); "…we can learn much from research that examines subjective, discontinuous, and local truths about groups of people and individuals who might not otherwise have a voice" (p. 511). Traditionally, the main discourse around campus climates at PWIs has been shaped by the White majority (e.g., Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). Consequently, when researching the experiences of racial minorities who are attending Predominantly White Institutions it is especially important to choose a research methodology that will enable the researcher to both explore these experiences in-depth and present the stories as truthfully as possible. Among the range of different qualitative methodologies that exists, narrative inquiry is not the only approach that could be utilized to explore the experiences of racial minority students at PWIs.

Other qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology would offer a different lens to the exploration of racial minority students attending PWIs. For example, grounded theory would enable the researcher to use the participants' stories to study the social processes that impact minority students' experiences with the aim of constructing a theory explaining how such experiences are created and formed. Ethnography, on the other hand, could potentially help describe and interpret "...the shared and learned patterns of values, behavior, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 2006, p. 68) such as a racial minority group. Lastly, phenomenology could also be used to study people's experiences, such as being a racial minority student at a Predominantly White

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Institution, with a goal of analyzing and explaining "...how people actively produce and sustain meaning" (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011, p. 262). Although these methodologies could have great potential when exploring racial minority students at PWIs, a narrative methodology seems like a better fit when the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of racial minority students' experiences of the campus climate and in the way that these students story their own experiences. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it might be useful to borrow elements from other methodologies in the conceptual framework for the study. For example, Clandinin and Caine (2008) describe narrative inquiry and "…its close attention to experience as a narrative phenomenon" (p. 542). In addition, although narrative inquiry "…tend to write up the work in a more holistic and embodied way" (Glesne, 2016, p. 288), the narrative analysis can use similar analytical tools as ethnography (Glesne, 2016). Consequently, this study will use elements from phenomenology and frame the study around the experiences of racial minority students at a PWI as the phenomenon the study is exploring.

The remaining sections of this chapter will explore narrative inquiry as a qualitative research methodology, the benefits and advantages of using this methodology when researching racial minorities at a PWI, and discuss how narratives were utilized in the present study.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative as Research.

Whereas narrative as a form of storytelling has been done for centuries, narrative inquiry is a relatively new field of research and it continues to develop and evolve (Chase, 2011; 2018). Narrative as a form of research has many names that differ across disciplines and research fields, such as narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988, 2007), narrative research (Creswell & Poth,

2018) and narrative construction (Barone, 2007), but the perhaps the most widely used name is narrative inquiry (e.g., Chase, 2011, 2018; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Analyzing narratives has been done for some time in areas of literature, but today it has also become a common method of research in the human sciences and it "…provides a way to systematically study personal narratives of experience" (Riessman, 2005, p. 5). Narrative research differs from storytelling and the field of literature in its focus on "…sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. Storytellers interpret the world and experience in it; they sometimes create moral tales – how the world should be" (Riessman, 2005, p. 1). In other words, narrative inquiry is "…the study of stories" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 241). Whereas all people tell stories of their lives, the narrative researcher not only describes these lives, but she also "…collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). It is the emphasis on understanding stories as a holistic picture that differentiates narrative research from more traditional forms of research within social science (Barone, 2007).

Origins of Narrative Inquiry.

Narrative inquiry grew out of a movement in the 1970s that emphasized the need for change in the field of social research and argued that "…evidence, such as personal descriptions of life experiences, can serve to issue knowledge about neglected, but significant areas, of the human realm" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 272). Prior to this, research employed a more logical method of knowing (Larson, 1997), in which "…the social sciences primarily modeled their approach to validation using conventionalist formulas" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 284). Thus, the belief was that in order for social scientists to make valid claims about reality, they had to have

numeric data and quantitative analysis as evidence. This change in what was considered evidence marked an increased interest in areas such as narrative research and led to the split of the field of social sciences into the two research communities of qualitative and quantitative research.

In the post-positivism era, it became more accepted to use qualitative forms of social science research, such as narrative inquiry, to examine, understand, and present social reality. The field of social research began to include other forms of truth than the logical-scientific truth because "…in the postmodern, there are multiple positions from which to know and standards of truth are always partial, context dependent, and embedded in webs of power relationships" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 11). Narrative inquiry as a qualitative research methodology became a more specific center of attention for researchers in the 1990s (Clandinin & Caine, 2008) and much research has been done over the past two decades related to the field of narrative inquiry. However, it is important to note that the goal of narrative research is not to replace the typical logic-based research, but instead it is an attempt to offer a different form of research presentation. The goal is to analyze and understand "…the stories lived and told" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68), in order to uncover the meaning behind the person's experiences.

Narrative Inquiry Today.

Today, narrative is utilized within a variety of disciplines and "…within the broad field of qualitative research, there are many analytic methods of forms of narrative analysis" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542). Stories are used as data to be studied across academic disciplines in areas such as "…literary criticism, history, philosophy, organizational theory, and social science" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 241). Although narrative inquiry is used in a wide range of fields such as the behavioral sciences and medicine (Block & Weatherford, 2013), the focus of this study is

more closely related to the social sciences and here narrative research can be found in anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education (Polkinghorne, 2007). It is important to note that within these disciplines and fields of study the use of narrative inquiry as a framework differs (for a good overview, see Chase, 2011) and there are "…different ways of understanding and different contexts to the narrative study of experience that deepen the methodology of narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542).

Compared to other qualitative frameworks, narrative is more loosely defined as there is no clear definition (Riessman, 2008) or single meaning for what this term might refer to (Andrews & Squire, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, it does not have a set beginning or end (Andrews & Squire, 2013), and in general it is a form of qualitative research that can include a broad range of work (Roulston, 2010). In addition, the use of narrative differs in its form and representation and narrative inquiry data includes a variety of types such as shared experiences, observations, interviews, interview transcripts, storytelling, letters, diaries, and other forms of documents (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Glesne, 2016). Representation of narrative research also varies, and over the past years scholars have argued that instead of focusing solely on textual representations of narratives and experience of others, it can be valuable to look at other methods of representing narratives (Byrne, 2015). Whereas Byrne argues for the use of poetic presentation (2015), others have used visual narratives such as collages made in collaboration between researcher and participant (e.g., Luttrell, 1997, 2003) and portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

However, common for all narrative research, regardless of discipline, form, and representation, is that the narratives are not simply told as a story. Rather, when narratives are used in social science research they are analyzed and interpreted (Riessman, 2005) to create a more holistic representation. In addition, all narrative inquiry involves a strong emphasis on the

relationship between the participants and the researcher (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Among the many types of narrative inquiry are approaches such as "…life history, oral history, biography, personal narrative, and narrative analysis" (Glesne, 2016, p. 287), as well as autoethnography and case study. For this research, a narrative analysis approach will be utilized to explore how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution.

Narrative Methodology.

At its simplest, a narrative researcher presents the collected data as stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Glesne, 2016). The participants are asked to share experiences from their own lives and "…this information is then often retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology" (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). The final product is often a combination of the participant's life stories and the researcher's views in an attempt to make meaning of the stories told by the participant (Creswell, 2014). As defined by Chase (2011), narrative as a research methodology has a "…distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares his or her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005).

An important part of narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how the participant "…links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it" (Glesne, 2016, p. 185). Although the researcher hears the consciously told stories of a person, the

researcher also has to look for deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). "Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim" (Bell, 2002, p. 209). Therefore, a narrative inquiry is not only listening to a story, but also understanding that the way a story is told and presented is part of the narrative itself. These stories provide the researcher with a "… window into people's beliefs and experiences" (Bell, 2002, p. 209). Thus, using narrative inquiry enables researchers to understand and examine the ways in which people use their own stories to create meaning and make sense of their experiences. Furthermore, it also opens up for examination of how people present the stories and experiences they share (Glesne, 2016) and narratives become "both phenomena under study and a method of study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4).

When a story is examined as a whole, including the way it was structured and told, the researcher is able to view the story as a larger narrative piece and while doing so, the researcher is "…imposing meaning on participants' lived experience" (Bell, 2002, p. 210). Thus, narrative inquiry involves a form of collaboration between the participant who shares her story and the researcher who interprets and re-tells the story. Although narrative analysis emphasizes the importance of a shared and collaborative research process in which the participant is involved in the construction of the narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), it is difficult, if not impossible, to create a narrative research piece that is not influenced to some extent by the interpretation of the researcher (Bell, 2002). Although attempts will be made to present the research as truthfully as possible, Bell (2002) argues that "…when researchers take people's stories and place them into a larger narrative, they are imposing meaning on participants' lived experience" (p. 210). Therefore, the narrative constructions will be shared with the participants to limit the researcher's interpretation and ensure that the participants' stories are presented as truthfully as possible.

In the context of the present study, narrative inquiry will allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences of racial minority students' at PWIs, while also paying attention to the way the stories are told and continuity across stories as interpreted by the researcher. The collaboration between participant and researcher will enable the minority students' voice to be heard, but it will also be important to understand the ways the presentation of the experiences is influenced by the researcher.

The Advantages of a Narrative Methodology.

There are several important advantages of using a narrative methodology when exploring racial minority students' experiences of the campus climate when attending a Predominantly White Institution. Among these are the ability of understanding the meaning of the collected data, giving voice to marginalized groups, capturing in-depth stories, as well as the potential for using narratives to create social change.

Meaning of Collected stories. This study utilized narrative inquiry as its methodological lens for understanding the experiences of racial minority students at a Predominantly White Institution. Past studies have for a long time argued for the importance of narrative research and the need to understand experience as lived and told stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). For example, Block and Weatherford (2013) stated that "…we need to somehow get to know the individual subjective experiences of the people with whom we teach and research using a variety of methodologies – methodologies that transcend traditional positivistic generalizations" (p. 500). Larson (1997) have argued for the need to not only focus on collecting data, but also focus on the meaning of the stories we collect (p. 468).

The ability to explore and interpret the meaning of experiences is an important advantage of narrative inquiry. As described by Riessman (2005):

> Narratives do not mirror, they refract the past. Imagination and strategic interests influence how storytellers choose to connect events and make them meaningful for others. Narratives are useful in research precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. The "truths" of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future. They offer storytellers a way to re-imagine lives (as narratives do for nations, organizations, ethnic/racial and other groups forming collective identities. (p. 6)

Thus, as compared to other methodologies, narrative inquiry will provide the researcher with the stories of the participants and the presentation of the stories told. It enables the researcher to look beyond the experiences of racial minority students and include the context of how and why they were presented. The dual-emphasis on content and form will provide the study with a more holistic view of the experience of racial minority students at PWIs, an understanding that is more difficult to gain when using other research methodologies.

Studying Marginalized Groups. Narrative inquiry is an especially useful methodology for exploring the experiences of racial minority students at a PWI as the interest in narrative emerged from work of marginalized groups (Riessman, 2005). As argued by Newman and Holzman (2006), "Narrative and storytelling, are valuable critical tools for exposing the methodological and ideological biases of modern social science. They are, and they produce, a reform of the dominant paradigm" (p. 5). Thus, compared to other methodologies, using a narrative approach will enable us to hear the voices of individuals in our society that otherwise rarely are exposed because they are not members of the majority group.

The ability of narrative inquiry to offer these students a voice amidst the dominant discourse at Predominantly White Institutions is of particular interest to this study. This is an important advantage because previous research indicates that minority students attending PWIs might have very different experiences than their White peers (e.g., Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Museus & Maramba, 2011). In addition, research has consistently found that PWIs tend to foster a campus culture that promotes norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, and practices that serve mainly White students, even if the school also has students of color, nationality, race, and ethnicity other than White (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Chang, 2002; Evans & Feagin, 2010; Gusa, 2010). Consequently, for a study exploring the experiences of racial minority students at a PWI it is vital to select a methodology that gives voice to these students. In the present research study, the use of narratives enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how racial minority students experienced the campus climate when attending a Predominantly White University, a voice that is often left out in the main discourse and research surrounding PWIs. Their narratives allowed the researcher to connect their personal stories to the context of the institutions they attend and revealed perspectives that are often overlooked in discussions about the campus climate. Furthermore, an important part of narrative inquiry is that stories are social and therefore "…connected to the flow of power in the wider world" (Riessman, 2008, p. 8). Thus, the narratives of the racial minority students in this study can first help us highlight issues that need to be addressed and areas in need of change. Next, this change can help improve the campus climate at the PWI and ensure that all students have positive experiences when they attend a PWI, regardless of their racial background.

Capture In-depth Stories. An additional advantage of a narrative methodology is the ability to capture in-depth stories as told by the participant. With the use of one or several longer

interviews, each participant can share his or her experiences as a racial minority student at a PWI without being prompted by predetermined questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although such interviews require access to racial minority students and the students' willingness to participate in the study, face-to-face interviews between the researcher and participant are a useful method of data collection that allow for more privacy as compared to, for example, group interviews. This is especially important for the present study as past research indicates that racial minority students often have negative experiences when attending PWIs, such as stigmatization, hostility, and racism (Guzman, Goto, & Wei, 2016; Museus, 2008). Therefore, face-to-face interviews were a useful method for exploring potentially sensitive and negative experiences of participants who might have been uncomfortable or who found it difficult to share these stories in a setting with other people.

Social Change. Lastly, a narrative methodology is a good fit for a study exploring experiences with a social justice component that aims to create change. Stories have the ability to create social change and Riessman (2008) describes how resistance movements, such as the civil rights movement or feminist movements, were "…born as individuals sat together and told stories about small moments of discrimination. Commonalities in the stories created group belonging and set the stage for collective action" (p. 9). Thus, exploring the experiences of racial minorities at PWIs using a narrative methodology can help highlight commonalities across the stories which can be used to push for changes in school policy and campus environment.

Methods

The present study is based on the idea that in order to improve campus climates at PWIs it is crucial to more fully understand the experiences of the minority students on campus, such as non-White students. This is similar to the previously mentioned description of narrative inquiry as "…meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2011, p. 421). Thus, it is only through "…placing the individual life experience at center stage" (Blustein, Kozan, & Connors-Kellgren, 2013, p. 264) and consequently giving voice to minorities who attend PWIs, that a researcher can gain a deeper understanding of how this group of students experience the campus climate.

Clandinin and Caine (2008) argue that there are two ways in which narrative inquiry can begin: "listening to individuals tell their stories and living alongside participants as they live their stories" (p. 543). The most widely used method is telling stories, often through interviews and conversations between the participant and researcher (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). This is also how data was collected in the present study.

Participant Selection.

The Predominantly White Institution being researched is a research university located in a smaller city in the Midwest, with a student body of approximately 15,000. Purposeful snowball sampling was utilized to recruit participants to the study. The recruitment targeted Asian American, Black, Latina/o, and Native American students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. All participants were 18 years or older. Working with personal contacts and student

associations, such as the student organization for Black students and Native Americans on campus, the researcher introduced the study to student leaders and personal contacts who worked with, or were part of, the target population. Once contact was made, participants were asked if they could help identify other potential participants.

IRB approval was obtained in the fall of 2017 and the phase of recruitment and data collection took place during the summer and fall of 2018, all data collection was finished by December 2018.

Number of Participants.

In qualitative research it is difficult to assess a specific number of participants as the sample size often depends on when enough data has been gathered to reach saturation, or in this case, when enough data has been gathered to tell the story of the campus. Initially, a sample size of 5 participants from each racial minority group was suggested as ideal. However, given that the focus of this study was on four different groups of students which varies in their representation on campus, it could have been necessary to seek out more participants in order to reach saturation or that the numbers of participants from each group would differ. In the end, it proved difficult to get a minimum of 5 participants from each group and it was especially challenging to gain access and recruit students from the two smaller groups on campus, Latina/o and Asian American students. Additionally, after the first (and only) phase of data collection was transcribed and read it was possible to reach two conclusions about the number of participants in this study.

The first conclusion was that in order to include most of the stories narrated by each participant and ensure that enough room was made for lengthier quotes and excerpts (to allow for the narrative nature of the study) it proved difficult to justify a second round of data collection to

reach the initial goal of 20 participants (five from each group). The second conclusion was that although one of the preliminary goals of this study was to tell the story of the campus, the initial phase of data collection caused the researcher to reach the conclusion that it was not possible to tell the story of an entire campus in a dissertation because of the time and length constrains of such a study. Thus, this study tells the story of how eight different minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution. Three of these students identified as Native American, two identified as Black, two identified as Asian American, and one identified as Latina.

The Participants.

Eight students at Midwest University shared their stories in this study. Their background and demographic details differed across a broad spectrum. Although some details have been removed or edited to ensure their anonymity, the majority of the details in their stories are shared in the sections below. Table 1 is an overview of their demographic details, listing their name (pseudonym), the ethnicity they identify with, their gender, where they consider home, year in school, and whether they want to stay in College Town beyond graduation. The table is followed by the second part of this chapter, where the stories each participant shared about themselves and their experiences at Midwest University are shared.

Table 1: Overview of participants

Name	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Home	Year	Future
Kimimela	Native American	Female	Reservation, same state	Undergraduate, senior	Not College Town
Imani	Black	Female	Big city, East Coast	Graduate	Not College Town
Ayasha	Native American	Female	Reservation, neighbor state	Undergraduate, senior	Not College Town
Lewa	Black	Female	Big City, East Coast	Undergraduate, junior	Not College Town
Elena	Latina	Female	Big City, neighbor state	Undergraduate, junior	Not College Town
Bayani	Asian American	Male	College Town	Graduate	Maybe College Town
Chimalis	Native American	Female	Reservation, same state	Graduate	College Town
Datu	Asian American	Male	Big city, neighbor state	Undergraduate, junior	Not College Town

Data Collection.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Each participant was interviewed once and the interviews lasted on average for one hour. Informed consent was gathered from each participant before the interviews took place and no compensation was given for participation in the study.

The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The interviews will be stored for three years and only the researcher will have access to the data. All participants in this study are anonymous and no information was collected that can identify the participants. If it was found necessary, the researcher changed personal details revealed during the interview in order to keep

the participants' identities anonymous. Small changes were also made in the transcripts only to help the reader understand what was being told, no changes were made that changed the meaning of what the participants said. In addition, the name of the college has been replaced with Midwest University (MU), the name of the town has been replaced with College Town (CT), and the name of the state has been replaced with Midwest State (MS) throughout all eight transcripts and the dissertation. Each participant was given a number used to label the audio recording, transcription, and any notes taken during the interview. In addition, the participants were asked to give herself or himself a pseudonym, if none was given one was selected for the participant based on the most common names for the individual's racial background. The pseudonyms were used in the written part of the study to be able to distinguish between the narratives and the participants.

Narrative Inquiry in the Present Study – Data Analysis.

After the interviews with the participants and the sharing of stories, the narrative researcher examined the collected data. Narrative inquiry assumes that "…human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition story structures. That is, we select those elements of experience to which we will attend, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories available to us" (Bell, 2002, p. 207). Therefore, an important part of a narrative study is to study both the story and the way the story is told. Maxwell (2013) contrasts qualitative research analyses such as coding and categorizing with narrative analysis. The latter, according to Maxwell (2013), is a form of connecting strategies that "…attempts to understand the data (usually, but not necessarily, an interview transcript or other textual material in context, using various methods to identify the relationship among the different elements of text" (p. 112). Thus, in order to understand how racial minority students perceive the campus climate at a PWI, we

need to understand the stories and experiences that have influenced and shaped their lives as students at PWIs (Larson, 1997).

Narrative analysis refers to "…methods for interpreting texts (e.g., oral, written, and visual) that have in common a storied form" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). A distinguishing feature of this type of analysis is the attention to how a participant describes experiences and why; "…narrative analysis interrogates intention and language – how and why incidents are storied" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). Thus, the researcher is not only examining the content and themes of the story, but also the representation of the story such as the type of language used by the participant, the purpose and audience of the story, and potential inconsistencies and counter-narratives (Riessman, 2008). Overall, the data analysis of narrative inquiry can be viewed as a more holistic approach to understanding the data as the concern is "…with the relationships among the different parts of the transcripts or field notes, rather than fragmenting these and sorting the data into categories" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 112). These relationships are what Maxwell (2013) argues will connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole.

Data Analysis – Step by Step. The transcribed interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach as described by Riessman (2008). Although attention was paid to both how the narratives were told and what was being told, as emphasized by Bell (2002), a bigger part of the analysis was the content of the narratives. An important challenge to a thematic analysis of narrative data is that it is quite similar to grounded theory (Riessman, 2008). In order to ensure that the data analysis aligned with a narrative inquiry approach, the stories from the participants were analyzed individually and as a whole as opposed to grounded theory where stories are often fragmented into smaller parts during the data analysis.

The thematic approach enabled the researcher to focus on how the narratives (experiences of racial minority students) are situated within the bigger (macro) context that they occurred in (the Predominantly White Institution). The intention was that this approach to analyzing the data allowed the researcher to get a more detailed understanding of how the participants' experiences as students were shaped by attending a PWI. In addition, it also allowed the researcher to re-tell several stories of the participant that together makes the bigger story of his or her experiences of the campus climate at the Predominantly White Institution. The aim of the data analysis was to reduce the interview data into several stories (themes) that together paint the picture of the students' experiences at the Predominantly White Institution. Similar to other narrative studies (e.g., Luttrell, 1997, 2003) longer quotes and excerpts were used from the interviews to illustrate the stories of the participants within each story and to keep their voices intact.

After the data was collected and transcribed in the fall of 2018, I read the transcriptions during November and December of 2018 in order to assess whether more data collection was needed. This enabled me to get an overview of the data and allowed me to conclude that enough data was collected in order to tell the stories of several participants in the four groups of this study. I then began to get re-acquainted with the stories the students had told me. Because of the narrative nature of the study, the students mentioned more stories than this paper would allow me to capture. I therefore made the choice to limit the focus of the study to three or four stories from each student. This allowed me to follow the length guidelines for this dissertation, while at the same time capture whole stories from the students and refrain from fragmenting their stories into smaller parts (Riessman, 2008).

Because of the emphasis on each student's individual story, the data analysis was divided into four phases. First, I carefully read through all eight interviews to get a general overview before I began examining each student separately. This was done purposefully in order keep the

students' stories unique and distinct, even if they had certain elements in common. During this first phase, I created a separate word document for each student where I included their demographic details such as gender, racial identity, major, class level, and whether they wanted to stay in College Town after graduation.

In the second phase, I examined the interviews separately and began writing the first draft of the student's story. In an attempt to not generalize the experiences of students who identified with the same racial identity, I was mindful of the order I analyzed the interviews and did not group the students according to their racial background. I began the individual examination of a transcribed interview by reading through the interview several times while writing short memos and initial codes. I paid specific attention to significant sentences, paragraphs, and/or stories related to a students' experience at the PWI. As I wanted to limit the stories from each participant to no more than four, I used the separate word document created in the first phase to include an overview of the in-depth stories the student shared with me, often by using the sentences that stood out to me as particularly powerful or describing of the story. Some of these sentences were later used as subheadings in Chapter four. Through this second phase I created a shortened version of their interview, consisting of direct quotes, bullet points, and some shorter paragraphs from the interview.

In the third phase of the analysis, I examined the sentences, bullet points, and paragraphs for significant themes. In order to avoid fragmentation of the data (Riessman, 2008), I went back to the original transcription and any sentence, bullet point, or paragraph examined for themes, were examined within the bigger context it was told. This helped me see where the student began describing the particular experience and allowed me to find longer excerpt I could use when re-telling the story in chapter four, using the student's own words.

Lastly, the fourth phase involved examining the stories I had pulled out and deciding which to include in this paper. After re-reading the transcript while closely looking at the themes I had found among the stories, I chose to re-tell the stories of the participant that seemed to describe the most about his or her experiences as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution. At some point during the interview, all eight students shared stories where they compared their experiences at Midwest University to their experiences before they came to MU. Although this was information I included in their individual introductions, I did not include longer excerpts from such stories because of length restrictions and purpose of including stories that described their experiences at the PWI. I also limited the amount of stories where they talked about experiences outside of the PWI, some were included if they had happened in College Town, but other stories were excluded because they did not involve the university setting or the surrounding community environment and therefore were outside the scope of this study.

The number of stories the students shared varied, but most of the interviews included a variation of longer and more in-depth stories, as well as shorter stories. Some of the students shared several stories with similar experiences of certain issues or topics. In these instances, because of the length constraints of the study, I most often chose to re-tell only one of the stories as an example of the experience and briefly mentioned the other instances. One example is Chimalis, she had several experiences where people would make derogatory remarks about Native Americans before finding out that she is Native American. After reading through her experiences, I chose to use a longer excerpt from her interview when she talked about one such instance when she was sitting in class hearing a couple of students talking about Native Americans. I first mention the other places she had similar experiences before inserting the quote in order to illustrate the experience using Chimalis' own words. Whenever I had to choose between several stories I tried to re-tell the story I viewed as most relevant to the student's

experience at the PWI. In Chimalis instance, the other examples were in line at the grocery store, at her husband's work, her own work, and from friends. This allowed me to include and re-tell a bigger part of their stories, while also limiting the length of the study.

Although it was important to not generalize or view one narrative as significant for the entire student group, I looked for similar themes across the participants' stories. However, to avoid generalization, these comparisons were made after I had chosen which stories would be included in the written part of the study. Additionally, in order to preserve the uniqueness of each student's experiences, the stories of the students are presented as separate sections in chapter four, before comparisons are made between the students' experiences in chapter five.

Underlying Goal of the Data Analysis. Important for this study is to understand the racial minority students' experiences in the context of how the participants present and describe their stories. Additionally, the participants' stories will be understood in the context of the Predominantly White Institution they are attending. This will facilitate a more in-depth and holistic understanding of how racial minority students' experiences are created and shaped by attending a PWI. The purpose of the narrative analysis is to allow for an understanding of these experiences to emerge from the participants' own stories, while at the same time also "…informing our understanding of broader social theories and processes" (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013, p. 219).

The underlying goal of the study is to use a narrative inquiry approach to understand how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution. If a PWI wants to ensure that all students are able to succeed when attending the university, past research indicates that exploring the experiences of minority students is especially important (e.g., Chang 2002; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011). However, if we are to more fully

understand how racial minority students perceive the campus climate, we need to understand the experiences that have influenced and shaped the participants' views (Larson, 1997). Using a narrative approach will enable me to capture the richness and depth of each participant's experiences and use their voice to understand the campus climate. Furthermore, the narrative approach might help develop ideas and suggestions that can be used to inform policy development, as well as highlight specific areas and issues that need to be addressed and changed by the administrators at the PWI.

Trustworthiness. Validity is a much debated topic in qualitative research and some researchers have argued that trustworthiness, authenticity, or quality are concepts more appropriate for a qualitative study (Maxwell, 2013). Riessman (2008), for example, suggests that "fixed criteria for reliability, validity, and ethics developed for experimental research…are not suitable for evaluating narrative projects" (p. 184-185). Therefore, trustworthiness will be used in this study to evaluate the narratives told by the participants. Although narrative truths are difficult to measure, both because they are personal stories and because they are always partial and incomplete (Riessman, 2008), certain steps will be taken to assess the trustworthiness of the research.

Following the suggestions of Riessman (2008), the focus of the trustworthiness of the present study will be on the researcher's interpretation of the data; she emphasizes that all theoretical claims and interpretations made by the researcher must be supported by the data and suggests three important steps (2008, p. 188) that will be utilized in this study to ensure trustworthiness of the researcher's interpretations. First, the researcher will document all sources that support any interpretations or theoretical claims made. Second, the researcher will strive to "…bring the reader along with them as they uncover a trail of evidence" (Riessman, 2008, p.

188). Thus, the reader will be able to see how the researcher came to a certain conclusion or claim. Third, the researcher will take a critical lens when evaluating the participants' narratives in comparison to the other participants' narratives. Riessman (2008) argues that these three steps will create cumulative evidence that the researcher can use to "…construct an interpretive account of his or her findings, storying the stories collected" (p. 188).

For the first step, this study only relies on the participants' stories. Although some qualitative studies rely on factual evidence, this will not be done in this research project. Denzin (2000) suggests that "…narratives do not establish the truth… of such events, nor does narrative reflect the truth of experience. Narratives create the very events they reflect upon. In this sense, narratives are reflections on – not of – the world as it is known" (p. xii). Thus, the nature of narrative research makes it difficult to rely on factual evidence or to verify the truth of the stories told by the participants (Riessman, 2008). In order to explain the interpretations and theoretical claims made in this study, quotes and excerpts from the interviews with the participants are used as documented sources. Thus, when an interpretation is made or a claim stated, I bring in examples from the stories shared by the participants. This also fulfills Riessman's (2008) second step by creating a trail of evidence from the interviews with the participants in chapter four to the interpretations made in chapter five of this paper. This way, the reader is able to see how the stories shared by the participants led me to reach certain conclusions or interpretations.

Lastly, step three involves taking a critical lens when evaluating the participants' narratives in comparison to the other participants' narratives. The aim of this study is to understand how racial minority students experience the campus climate at a PWI. As argued by Riessman (2008), the focus of the study is therefore on the meaning-making of the narrators and not whether the experience of the student "…really unfolded in the sequence reported, or whether every detail was correct" (p. 188). In this study, there were a range of different experiences.

Some of the stories paints a picture of a University with many racial related issues, while other stories tell the story of a University that treats all students the same. Regardless of the narrative, I have tried to re-tell the stories as told by the participants and thus shed light on the various experiences that exist among the student population at Midwest University. The students in the study shared their interpretation of their past experiences and I have interpret the student's interpretation (Riessman, 2008). None of the stories are used to establish the truth of how minority students experience the campus climate when they attend Predominantly White Universities. Instead, I treat their narratives as reflections on how eight unique minority students experience the campus climate at a PWI in the Midwest.

Reflexivity. During my years as a doctoral student I considered a range of potential topics for my dissertation. However, in the end it was important for me to choose a topic that focused both on a social justice component as well as lifting voices that are seldom heard in discussion of the campus climate. I chose the topic of racial minority students' experiences of the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution because of my awareness and knowledge of racial incidents at Midwest University. It has therefore been key to not let my personal history with the university influence the questions asked in the interviews or my interpretation of the students' experiences whether they experienced racism on campus or not. In addition, during the analysis phase it was imperative that I included all experiences of the campus climate at the PWI, regardless of the type of experience shared.

Being a White female, I, as the researcher, was not part of any of the four groups of minority students I interviewed for this study. This could have been a potential barrier during data recruitment and one of the reasons for why I relied on the snowball technique to get access to potential participants. Additionally, it was particularly important to frame the questions around

topics that might be sensitive and emotional for the participants in this research in a manner that was not offensive or created an atmosphere of "I" versus them (or White versus non-White). Thus, the use of a semi-structured interview guide helped me plan my questions and ensure that they were phrased in a neutral, but sympathetic manner. Additionally, because I am White, I will not be able to fully understand all the experiences the students in this study shared as I do not share their racial identity. Therefore, the use of longer quotes and excerpts from the interviews have been important in order to use their own words to describe their experiences as much as possible.

Ethical Considerations. As argued by Wang and Geale (2015), "…ethics in narrative research is a set of responsibilities in human relationships: responsibilities for the dignity, privacy, and well-being of the participants" (p. 197). Therefore, all participants in this study were contacted prior to the interviews. The participants were given a full explanation of the study in order to ensure that they knew the aim and goals of the study. The goal of this process was to help create a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as ensuring that the "…participants do not feel surprised or deceived later on" (Wang & Geale, 2015, p. 198) if they would like to read the final work of the study. The explanation of the study also included details such as how much time the interview would take and that the participant could choose a location for the interview where he or she was comfortable. After this information was shared with the participant, informed consent consistent with IRB guidelines were given to the participant and signatures were obtained from the participant.

Past research indicates that the experiences of racial minority students at PWIs can be both difficult and sensitive (e.g., Guzman, Goto, & Wei, 2016; Museus, 2008), which can pose ethical risks. Therefore, before each interview began the participants were informed that she or he

could take breaks as needed or stop the interview at any time. If needed, the participants were given contact information to the university's counseling center.

The sensitive nature of the study also makes it important to ensure that the final product of this research conveys the participants' narratives as consistently with their own stories as possible. Although arguments exist to whether member-checks should be used in narrative research (e.g., Maxwell, 2013; Riessman, 2008), member-checks continue to be an important method for removing any misinterpretations of what participants said and identify potential researcher bias (Maxwell, 2013). Riessman (2008) also argues that "…the credibility of an investigator's representation is strengthened if it is recognizable to participants" (p. 197). Thus, in an attempt to be mindful of the stories borrowed from the participants, all participants were asked if they wanted to read through the transcript of their interview. Not everyone wished to read their transcript, but this enabled those who did to see whether their identities were anonymous or if any identifying information had been included in the work (if so, these details were removed). For those interviews that were not reviewed by the participant, the researcher spent an additional round of reading to ensure that all identifying details were removed. In addition to the ethical reasons, this process also helped strengthen the trustworthiness of the data (Riessman, 2008).

Conclusion

Although there are a variety of possible research methodologies that can be utilized for any study, it is important that the methodology is a good fit for the goals of the study and questions the researcher wants to answer. The present study seeks to understand how racial minority students' experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution. To this day, much of the traditional work within quantitative research is far removed from the general

public and is not widely popular outside academia (Badgett, 2015). Thus, a qualitative research methodology, such as narrative inquiry, can be viewed as an attempt to not only create a more holistic way of representing research, but also a way to give readers a

> …more understandable context of the qualitative research being presented when researchers think of writing as an art and attend to writing well. Readers are more easily drawn into the problem or issue at hand, and if done well, more easily persuaded to accept the complexities of the research being presented. (Block & Weatherford, 2013, p. 501)

Furthermore, narrative inquiry has the potential to "…deepen our understanding of the lives of others and lead to better ways of responding to the social and educational problems plaguing us" (Larson, 1997, p. 468). Thus, potential issues at institutions of higher education can arguably receive more attention when presented as narratives compared to other forms of research. Perhaps even more importantly, narrative inquiry can enable us to more fully understand the experiences of racial minority students at PWIs and highlight areas that universities and colleges should improve in order to ensure that all students, regardless of racial background, can thrive and succeed.

Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter

This chapter described methodological approach used in this study, as well as the methods utilized for data collection and analysis. In addition, I reviewed the possibility of using other qualitative methodologies before presenting an in-depth examination of narrative inquiry. This chapter also discussed ethical considerations, reflexivity, and trustworthiness. A short introduction of the participants was given and in the reminding chapters of this paper I will be referring to the participants as students. I will also maintain their present tense for the purpose of

re-telling their stories the way they originally were shared. Chapter four tells the stories of eight

minority students at Midwest University, a Predominantly White Institution in the Midwest.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This narrative inquiry delves into the lives of eight students at Midwest University. In this chapter I introduce the students, re-tell and inquire into stories of their experiences as minority students at a Predominantly White Institution. The stories of the students are told in eight separate sections in order to preserve the uniqueness of each student's experiences. This allows the reader to hear their stories one by one and highlights the diversity among the experiences of the minority students who attend a Predominantly White Institution. The eight sections are not grouped according to racial identity, but instead placed in a random order where no students with the same racial identity are placed after the other. This was done intentionally to further emphasize the uniqueness of each student and his or her stories. Together, their stories about Midwest University highlights the students' experiences with the university setting, the community environment, and reveals how their identities are impacted by what they have experienced as minority students at a PWI.

As I describe the students, emphasis is placed on the stories they shared with me. However, each section begins with an introduction of the student, including details of the personal interaction we had during the interview, as well as the relational aspect. Every interview was a process of getting acquainted before the student spoke about his or her experiences. There was a range of openness and level of engagement from the different students, some were very open about their experiences as soon as we began the interview, while others were more hesitant before they spoke more openly about what they had experienced at the PWI. The chapter ends with a summary that ties the stories together and emphasizes the importance of understanding the

stories of the eight students individually in order to more fully understand how minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution.

Introducing Kimimela

Kimimela is a female undergraduate student who identifies as Native American. At the time of the interview, she was a senior at Midwest University and in the midst of pursuing her pre-med major. Kimimela grew up on a reservation a couple of hours from College Town and was familiar with the town and university when she grew up. She began her college career at a local college before she transferred to MU as a sophomore. For Kimimela, the Native American Center on campus has been particularly important for her and she has continued to utilize the space and its resources throughout her years at the university. Although her overall experience of the campus has been good, she has struggled with being one of the only non-White students in her courses and being the only voice to represent the minority perspective in class discussions.

While I had never met Kimimela before being introduced by a common acquaintance, I had heard about her in my initial discussions with our acquaintance who helped me recruit several of the participants in this research. She had told me that Kimimela would be an interesting person to interview as she has experience of the campus climate as both a minority student and a student employee at the Multicultural Center at Midwest University. When I approached her to ask her if she would be interested in participating in this research, she was hesitant and a bit quiet when she answered, but she soon explained that she wondered if she would have enough to contribute. When we sat down to have our conversation about her experiences, she was again a bit hesitant and shy, but she warmed up during our conversation and shared many of her experiences as a minority student at Midwest University and in College Town.

Kimimela was in the middle of her last semester as an undergraduate student during our interview and has now officially graduated with her undergraduate degree and as a pre-med student. She is currently living and working in College Town in order to get a year with more patient care experience before she will be applying to med-school at Midwest University. She plans on staying in town for med-school in order to be able to spend more time with her family and her brother will be joining her at Midwest University in the coming fall to pursue his undergraduate degree. When she has obtained her medical degree, Kimimela wants to move back home to her reservation and find a job.

I explore several of Kimimela's stories about her experiences at Midwest University in this chapter: her journey to MU and wish to be close to home, the difficulties with having perspectives and beliefs that not everyone understands, and her dream to be an example for her reservation and younger generations back home. I chose to re-tell these stories because they seemed to me to describe the most about Kimimela's experiences as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution.

Being close to home.

Kimimela began her college career right out of high school at a local state college not far from the reservation she grew up on. It was a small college and she found it hard to fit in, "…I didn't like it, I just felt it was a small town college and everybody knew each other and I was like going into forbidden territory that I wasn't… I didn't feel as welcomed." She spent her first semester on campus, but her second semester she moved home and took online classes from the state college and through the community college in her hometown. Her second year in college

she was able to transfer to MU and "…it was so much better. I was probably a little bit depressed too, when I was at [name of local college]. But everything worked out."

College Town and Midwest University were familiar to Kimimela before she became a student. She had visited CT all her life, living only a couple of hours away. A lot of people from her reservation had attended MU and her high school had a MU representative visit each year to talk about the university. Her two main reasons for coming to MU were the location and the academic options, "It was close to home for me and they have a medical school which is what I am interested in." However, one of the biggest benefits for her was the financial aspect of transferring to MU, "…what also really brought me to [MU] was the cultural diversity tuition waiver which is probably the only way I would be able to afford college." In addition, the social aspect of MU was in stark contrast to her experiences at the local college she previously attended as she had friends who were already students at MU when she transferred "…so it was really easy to have someone here and be able to go to school. It made it less lonely." College Town was a bigger city compared to where she had spent her first year in college and she enjoyed having more diverse people around her and always finding something to do outside of school.

When she began her first semester at MU, she was a bit uncomfortable as one of few Native Americans in her classes

> "…when I first started to come here I felt a little bit out of my circle because I went to a school off the reservation but it was like 98% Native American students so I personally haven't really had experience with other races especially Caucasians and so coming here I did feel like a little bit, 'oh am I the only brown person sitting at this table' and I just, I felt a little scared, a little intimidated at first, but as I keep going I do see that I am one of

like three brown people in this classroom of like twenty but it's not, it's okay now for me,

like I found that I can express myself and it is easier now."

As she learned her way around campus and became more familiar, she began utilizing the Native American Center on campus. She found it easy to go there because she already knew people there and heard about it from others. Throughout the years at MU, most of her friends on campus are Native American students she either knew from home or whom she met at the university.

Some beliefs I feel like not everyone can understand.

Although Kimimela found the Native American Center on campus right away, it took a long time before she discovered that there were other student organizations for minority students on campus; "…to find those student organizations you have to physically look for them yourself… all these other student organizations for minorities I had no idea about." She also adds that she was pleasantly surprised when she found the Multicultural Center on campus where she has worked as a tutor and spends a lot of time interacting with other students. She views the center as a place on campus that works towards a more positive campus experience for the students and there is a lot more diversity among the people who utilize the place, "…I see many different people coming through here, it ranges from all cultures and it is nice to see and it is nice to get to know people."

In addition to the lack of information about the student organizations on campus, Kimimela found that minority students lacks physical spaces on campus

"I think that diverse students need more spaces. Because I know we have the American

Indian Center and that is nice for Native Americans and we are inclusive, we tell

everybody that anybody can come in. This space [the Multicultural Center] I feel is really

small compared to other spaces, the multicultural center, and I think there needs to be more spaces for students to feel comfortable and to come in and not have to worry about judgment or anybody looking at you differently."

Lack of inclusion on campus has also been a challenge in her classes at times. As a minority student, being different from the Caucasian student population has made her experiences different from the majority population. Although she has never had any problems participating in classes where the majority of her peers are White, she has found some courses to more challenging

"I am taking an Indian studies [class] right now and it is nice to see other students in there, but then again I can also tell that they are probably not… they aren't as interested in what we are learning and it is hard to see that too, but I feel like in the world you are just going to experience that."

Kimimela has found her classroom experiences to vary, but that an occurring dilemma has been voicing her own perspective in a class that is predominantly White and that might overlook other perspectives, "…I am sure the teachers wouldn't have a problem with it, but some beliefs I feel like not everyone can understand." Kimimela has also had to think about how she interacts with people who are not Native American. She lives in a house where she is the only Native American and non-White person

"…and it gets hard sometimes because it is hard to show them my culture, or even the way I act sometimes is different from what they are used to and then I also have to be super cautious about what I say because what I would say could mean something different to them."

Kimimela also talks about her professors and the impact they can have in a class to ensure that everyone feels included. She points out that diversity training for faculty could be one way to

help professors "…understand the many differences" that exists among the student population on campus. She mentioned one former professor who did a particularly good job at including more than the dominant perspective;

> "I took a religion class that was taught by a female rabbi and she was always making sure that everyone felt included. We had talks on more than one way of death throughout like different cultures and so whoever had more to say about it who was in that culture she definitely asked them. I feel like that was pretty inclusive."

Kimimela thinks that educating both faculty and students about diversity and different cultures is one way to try to make it easier for minority students on campus;

> "We put on the powwow, the annual powwow, every year and I have heard some people like 'oh, what is that', and we explain it to them to our best but…we can only reach so many people. And when they come they are so amazed by it so I think that is really nice that the students are willing to go to these things and willing to experience it and seeing their reactions is really nice."

Being an Example.

After almost four years in college, Kimimela is finishing the last semester of her undergraduate degree before taking a year off to get more work experience before applying to med-school. Although she was applying to med-schools in different states, Midwest University was her first choice because of the short distance to her family. Being close to her family is important to her and she has tried to visit home as often as she could during her years at MU. While she says she likes living in College Town, she has never planned on staying after college.

Her dream is to move back home to her reservation once she has obtained her medical degree and be an example to younger generations:

> "…my major thing was that I want to help my reservation because it is a Native American reservation and at IHS [Indian Health Services] we don't have many native American doctors which I think would be more encouraging to the community. Not only to old people but to younger people."

For Kimimela, being a student at Midwest University allowed her to be close to home and pursue an education that will enable her to help her community back home and serve as an example of what other Native American students can achieve.

Introducing Imani

Imani is a female graduate student who identifies as Black. At the time of the interview, she had just graduated with her masters from Midwest University and was currently pursuing her Ph.D. at a different university in the United States. Imani grew up on the East Coast and had never been to the Midwest or MU before she became a graduate student at the university. She pursued her undergraduate degree at a smaller university on the East Coast and chose to come to Midwest University because of recommendations from her previous advisor. For Imani, moving away from the East Coast was difficult and the support from her undergraduate advisor and parents was very important to her. Although the lack of diversity was something she expected and noticed from the beginning, her overall experience at MU was good until she began to hear about other minority students' negative experiences at the university.

I knew Imani from a class we had taken together while I was a Ph.D. student and she was pursuing her masters. We kept in touch and I initially approached her about possibly participating

in this research when I proposed my study in the fall of 2017 while she was completing her last year at MU. What made me hope Imani would say "yes" to participating in this study was that she was the only one I was able to talk to that had attended a different Predominantly White Institution for her undergraduate degree and at the time of the interview she had begun to pursue her Ph.D. at a third PWI. Imani is currently living in a different state in the United States where she is a doctoral student. She plans on becoming a professor once she has completed her Ph.D. and hopes to go back home to the East Coast to pursue her academic career.

My interview with Imani was one of the longer ones in this study and there are many stories she told that I could have included in this inquiry. I chose to re-tell the following stories because they seemed to describe the most about her experiences at the Predominantly White Institution and in College Town. Three stories about her experiences of the campus climate are explored: her transition from the East Coast to the Midwest, how she had a good time at MU, but not all minority students at MU share this experience, and that not everyone has the time of their life in college.

Midwest vs. East Coast.

Being born on the East Coast of the United States, Imani decided she wanted to pursue her undergraduate degree in a neighboring state on the East Coast. The university was a small private university not too far away from her family and she could travel home during the weekends by train or bus. When Imani began her senior year at the university she began looking at universities to continue to pursue her masters degree. She applied to several colleges and was accepted to two universities, one not too far away from her family and Midwest University. For Imani, it was a tough decision to make. The other university did not offer her funding, but

Midwest University was far away from her family and she knew little about College Town or the area. However, with the guidance of faculty at her undergraduate university and the support from her parents she made the decision to accept admission to the fully funded masters program at MU.

When she came to MU she did not know a lot about College Town, "…all I knew is that it was in [Midwest state] and it was cold. And it was far, but the people seemed nice." Although Imani had spent her undergraduate years at a university in a smaller town on the East Coast, moving to College Town and becoming a graduate student at Midwest University was a big change. One of the biggest differences for her was the lack of diversity, but she also said she found people in College Town to be nicer than on the East Coast, "people will hold doors open for you, they'll smile at you if you look in their direction. There's like that Midwestern charm as people say." Imani did not know a lot about MU either, but expected attending a university in the Midwest to be a different experience compared to her undergraduate years on the East Coast

"I wasn't really sure what to expect when I went to [Midwest University]. Because the Midwest is a completely different thing than the East Coast where I am originally from and where I went to school for undergrad, so I wasn't sure. I was like, I already knew there was gonna be a lot of White people. That was one thing I knew for sure and I kind of stereotyped them and I thought that maybe there would be like a lot of farm type people. I wasn't completely wrong about that and my friend thought there was a lot of cows and tornadoes. I don't know why they thought that. But I didn't really know what to expect, but I was excited to go because it's something different than what I'm used to and I really like to travel and move to places."

For Imani, there were many things that were different at MU compared to her experiences during her undergraduate years. Although she had good experiences and the lack of diversity didn't necessarily bother her, the campus demographic was a stark contrast to the East Coast,

> "this was a little amusing to me, but literally everyone look and dress the same. And I even had that experience when I was a TA too, in my class sometimes I would get confused with students' name because they all looked the same, like it was – yeah, it was a bit odd."

She also found the political climate to be visibly different than her previous university experience. As she worked as a TA during her masters, she often got comments from students about how liberal they found her, "I was a TA for an [introduction class], I had a lot of students tell me how liberal I was and how liberal [her major] is." However, she found the comments to be made out of surprise and not in a negative manner.

I had a good time, but.

For Imani, the two years she spent at Midwest University were good to her. Although the town was smaller than she was used to, she appreciated the downtown area and found that there were more things to do than she first thought. MU's campus was bigger than she expected and there was always something going on. She met new people, some of whom became her best friends. However, towards the end of her last year at MU she began to realize that not all minority students shared this experience and she said that this colored the way she views her time at MU,

> "Like I had a good time but then hearing about these incidents that occurred on campus, but it was, you know, it wasn't shocking but it was mostly, it was undergrads that were

experiencing, and I'm pretty sure they were new undergraduates experiencing these

unfortunate incidences."

Imani never had any experiences where she felt uncomfortable on campus, "I never personally

experienced that at all... I never felt like the university excluded me from things like that or I

ever felt like excluded from things because of my race or anything like that, while I was there."

Imani said she thinks her experience at MU was different than other minority students because

she was in a smaller graduate program with very supportive professors and peers and she never

lived on campus and therefore didn't spend as much time there.

> "In a way I was kind of happy that I'm a grad student and that doesn't really happen to me
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> because I don't live on campus... I don't have to worry about those things as much and
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> then also within my program too, people were more open minded... so I just felt like my
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> experience definitely is different from, I guess like some, an undergraduate student
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> because, you know, they're experiencing more, they are on the campus more often so they
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> definitely, you know, will obviously have a different perception of the campus climate
>
> than me."

In addition, Imani has found that the color of her skin plays an important part in how people treat

her in general "because I am more fair skinned I have noticed that people will obviously feel

more comfortable around me or will treat me different than they would to another person of color

that is a darker shade than me." She adds that her hair also makes a difference "especially if I

wear my hair straight too rather than curly, sometimes I feel like people feel more welcoming

towards me." Imani shares that she thinks most minority students who look different from the

majority population have to adapt their behavior accordingly when interacting with others

> "I feel as though, like a minority student probably have to do like a bit of coding when
>
> they talk around other people sometimes so they are not perceived as like the negative

stereotypes of, like especially like for black people, you don't want to be perceived as ghetto or loud or something like that. They probably definitely would have to put on like a show when you are around people maybe, especially if you are not from the area. And where I feel like White people don't really have that problem they can just be whoever they want to be and not really have any consequences or people thinking negatively of them."

Despite having to be mindful about her behavior as one of few minority students on campus, Imani said that for her it was not necessarily a bad experience being different from the majority population on campus, "there was really not a bad experience, just something that I noticed but not something I am not used to because like my undergrad, that's how I felt like in the classrooms sometimes." However, having graduated from MU she has realized that being "the only person of color" has not been easy for every minority student at the university.

College is supposed to be the time of your life, but it's not for everyone.

As a student at Midwest University, Imani never felt uncomfortable or unwelcome and had positive experiences both at MU and in the overall community of College Town

"I never had someone give me dirty looks or something like that, or someone say a racial slur towards me or anything like that. I felt like it was pretty fine, like I would go downtown and not have problems, I never felt like someone was judging me or my race. Even if I went, like did something on my own like if I wasn't with one of my White friends or something like that I never felt like they're just looking at me like oh is she sketchy or kind of judging me at all."

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For Imani, the only time she felt uncomfortable at MU was at night when she walked home but this, she adds, is how she feels no matter where she is because "as a woman, I always feel uncomfortable walking at night." However, she found that despite her positive experience, hearing about stories from other minority students who had experienced racism on campus made her aware of the changes that are needed at MU. Despite having a general understanding that not all students will have good experiences in college, she never knew how bad it was at her own college

> "I feel like at any school that I go to, because every school is predominantly White, I know, I am aware that not, that there is going to be negative experiences. But I have never known like how bad of an experience it is [until her last semester at MU]…You never know how bad it is until you hear people talking about it, like I just assumed that like you know, obviously some people of color is going to have negative experiences because they probably don't feel accepted, they probably don't feel included, they could be like me, a first generation student and like this is their first time ever experiencing college and they don't really know what to expect."

The stories she has heard from other minority students have made Imani realize that the negative experiences of minority students at MU might be many but not widely known across campus because

> "We don't talk about it, cause they might not even report the incidents, because they probably don't feel comfortable, they probably feel as though, like nothing will be done about it and it will just be like, well this is how it is and, which really sucks and I feel as though if someone is being, say a derogatory term towards you, you should definitely take action, should definitely report it, and action should be taken by the administration to do

that, but I am not entirely sure, I feel as though something, if it is a sexual assault it would

probably maybe be taken more seriously than someone being called the N word. But… I

feel as though horrible things have to dealt with."

The stories also made her firmly believe that students, faculty, and the administration needs to

change to improve the overall campus culture at MU

"students need to be aware of people's struggles and so do faculty members and so do the

administration. Like everyone needs to be aware that not everyone has the same

experience and the color of your skin has, is partial the reason why they don't have the

same experiences or have like great experiences in college because you know, we go to

college and it is the time of your life. But it is not the time of your life for everyone."

For Imani, the two years at Midwest University were good but they also left her with the

impression that changes are needed in order to ensure that all minority students at MU have

positive experiences. Awareness and openness about such experiences are crucial, Imani

believes, if Predominantly White Institutions, such as MU, want to create a positive campus

climate for all of their students.

Introducing Ayasha

Ayasha is a female undergraduate student who identifies as Native American. At the time

of the interview, she was a senior and declared pre-med. Ayasha grew up with her mother on a

reservation in the Midwest and moved to College Town when she was accepted as an

undergraduate student. Her father is not Native American and she has spent some time with him

in the state he lives, but most of her time before MU was spent at the reservation. Although she

grew up in a neighboring state, Ayasha had never been to College Town or Midwest University

before she toured the university as a high school student. She was surprised that she liked the campus as she had always pictured herself moving far away to attend college in a bigger city. Her years at MU has been good to her, she has made many new friends, is heavily involved on campus, and is preparing for her next step at med-school. Although she says it has been difficult to be one of the few minority students on campus, she is eager to continue her education and attend med-school. However, leaving the reservation to go to college was a challenging decision and she has struggled with feelings of guilt when missing out on cultural events at home. In addition, as she has grown and changed throughout the years at college, it has become increasingly more difficult for her to go home because these changes have often been met with jokes and comments.

I had never met Ayasha before our interview, but she was one of the students who wanted to participate in the research after I visited one of my former professor's classes and spoke about my study. She was one of the two students who came up to speak to me after my talk and was eager to hear more about the research and participating in an interview.

During the interview Ayasha had just begun her senior year at Midwest University and she is now finishing her last semester before she will go on to med-school. Although she has applied to MU, she hopes to receive an acceptance letter to a university located about an hour away from her reservation in a larger city. Ayasha is divided in her thoughts about the future and whether she wants to move back home to the reservation to work and live. She knows she wants to work off the reservation for a couple of years to gain more experience, but she also wants any future children to learn about their heritage, culture, and traditions.

Ayasha told me about her decision to attend a university closer to home, the difficulties she faced when leaving the reservation, and the challenges she is currently facing when she

travels home during breaks. She also told me about her experiences as the only Native American member in her sorority and the value and importance she places on her traditions.

Deciding to stay closer to home.

Ayasha was born in the Midwest and grew up with her mother on a reservation in a neighboring state. The reservation is located next to a big river and one of the biggest differences for Ayasha when she came to Midwest University was the change of scenery. Although College Town is a bigger with a higher population, she missed the river, hills, and colors that surround her home. Before she began her college career at MU, Ayasha went to high school close to her reservation with mostly Caucasian and Native Americans. For her, MU was never a school she considered applying to because she wanted to move to a bigger city

> "I thought I would go a little further from home or somewhere more urban, I guess. And then, the only school that I applied to and got accepted to that I was considering was in [big city in the Midwest]. So, that was my first choice for a while. And then, I did not expect to like it here, especially just when you think of [College Town] it just never sounded appealing to me. But I came here and toured on a whim, and it ended up feeling better. You don't have to walk as far to classes. It's not right in the middle of the city. It's easier to get around. And it's still bigger than my home town."

Although she had a couple of friends from her home town who were students at MU, she did not know much about the university other than the variety of resources offered to Native American students at MU.

Her first semester at Midwest University was both scary and exciting for Ayasha. She already knew she wanted to pursue a medical degree, but did not declare her major right away, "I

was kind of scared to declare my major because I was like do I want to go to school that long."

Although she was intimidated by the commitment, she declared her major as pre-med and she

also became involved in various campus activities outside of her classes.

Oh, because you're White now.

Although Ayasha seemed happy about the decision to begin college, she described it as

both challenging and difficult to leave her reservation

"…when you are a Native American, and you leave home… it's kind of hard to leave the

reservation. And everyone is so – it's not a bad thing, but it's like people don't leave. Or

they leave, and they come back. Or they feel like, if you – it's like you're abandoning

them almost."

She describes feeling guilty for not being home and missing out on cultural events. However, she

also finds it difficult when people from her reservation makes jokes or comments about her

getting an education

"It's meant to be all fun and games. It's not serious. But sometimes, it crosses a line

where you know there's a little bit of seriousness behind it, even though they're just

joking or whatever. They'll be like just snarky comments where they'll joke and be like

oh, because you're White now or something like that. Or they'll say that you sound White

because of how you talk. And it's like I don't sound White, I sound smart. And it's not a

bad thing to use good grammar and go to school."

She describes how she gets mixed messages about getting an education. On the one hand, she

says that Native Americans are encouraged to get an education, their success is not only an

example of how far they can go but also counteractive to stereotypes of Native Americans not

contributing to society. At the same time, however, she says that the Native population makes it hard for people like her who are pursuing an education

"…the Native population is making it harder on themselves because they make you feel bad for going out and doing it because they're like I wouldn't say jealous, but they think you're trying to be something that you're not. Or they think that you're giving in to the White man's ways or something like that. So, it's contradicting. It makes it hard sometimes because it's like I know that I'm doing the right thing and that I'm doing what's going to help us all, in the long run. But, at the same time, you just deal with the crap of like oh, you go home, and they're like you think you're better than us now."

Ayasha says that people in her situation use a lot of humor about it, that there are memes about it where Native Americans who, for example, are getting an education are called an apple because they are seen as red on the outside but White on the inside.

The token, the outsider by default.

Despite challenges from home, Ayasha quickly became involved on campus and during her first year at MU she joined a sorority,

"I didn't think that I would join one, when I was coming to college. I never thought they were bad, but I just didn't know anything about it. And I was like I don't really think it sounds worth it because you have to pay for it and everything. But then, my freshman roommate kind of talked me into doing the recruitment weekend. And I just did it with the mentality where I was like I'll just do it, go through this weekend, and I'll meet girls in the process but not join a house because you get to stay with the same group of girls throughout the whole weekend. So, I thought I could make friends with them. But then, I

somehow just ended up loving one of the houses. So, now, here I am junior year still

liking it. Now, I'm really involved. I have positions in our house and everything. So, it's

kind of weird how that worked out. But I do enjoy it a lot. I'm glad that I did it."

Despite having great experiences in her sorority, the decision to join has been difficult at times.

Overall, Ayasha finds it challenging to be one of the few minority students on campus and not

being part of the majority population

"…regardless of how welcoming the non-minority population on campus is, it's still

intimidating just to know that you are like, I guess, literally, the minority. That you're like

kind of the outsider by default, just because you are different from the rest. No matter how

similar your personalities are or whatever, you're still going to have a different experience

in life, in general."

She describes people being surprised that she is part of a sorority because she is not a White girl

and does not fit the stereotype of a typical sorority girl

"even if it's subconsciously, people just automatically kind of have their assumptions

about what you would be like, I guess. So, I think, sometimes, people are surprised, if I'm

in a sorority because it's like basic White girl thing to do or whatever. That's like the

stereotype."

Ayasha has other minority friends who are in sororities who experience the same and use humor

when they talk about it

"…they joke and call themselves the token black girl because there's only one of them in

the whole house. So, it automatically makes you feel kind of singled out, not because

people are trying to make it a negative thing, but it's just strange because you don't have

someone else that can relate"

Despite facing challenges from both home and on campus, humor seems key in how Ayasha faces comments and stereotypes from others.

Caring about traditions.

Although the use of humor might help when faced with stereotypes and negative comments, Ayasha says that even though her lifestyle right now might be more typically White, her roots and traditions are important to her. She travels home every year to the powwow on her reservation and she also attends the annual powwow in College Town. For her, it doesn't seem challenging to combine being a Native American and pursuing higher education, "but people feel like you can't do both at the same time, sometimes. So that's a challenge here. But that would be a challenge no matter where I went."

When thinking about her future, Ayasha is not sure where she wants to go or where she wants to live. She prefers going somewhere else than MU for med-school, but doesn't feel like she can be too picky, "If you get into med-school, you're lucky. So, if it was my only option, I would take it, but it wouldn't be my first choice." What she will be doing after she has graduated from med-school, on the other hand, is a difficult question for her

> "I want to branch out and go somewhere else. But I feel like, later in life, I would go back maybe because all of my family is there. And if I were having children or something, I'd want them to grow up around their family. And I would want them to know why we are what we are. They won't learn that, if they don't have a good knowledge of where we came from and our traditions. I don't want that to be something that's just forgotten, I guess. And I'm lucky enough to be super familiar with it and really appreciate it. So, I want them to, too."

She says one of her ideas is to work and live in a bigger city not far away from her reservation, which would allow her to begin her career outside of the reservation and give her experience and opportunities she would not get in a tribal clinic. It would also make it easier to travel home to the reservation and visit her family. She pictures herself going back to live on the reservation and work at their tribal clinic once she has had a career somewhere else, "I think later, once I'm getting kind of like, I guess, just older and tired, I always thought, later down the road, I would go home because we have a tribal clinic." For Ayasha, getting experiences outside of her reservation is important and she has many goals and dreams for her future,

> "I need to get my bearings somewhere else, I think. I wish more people would do that. That's one thing I wish I could encourage more people to experience life off of the reservation or further away because I just feel like you're missing out on so much. Not that the reservation is not amazing in itself, but I like to travel. So, I don't want to just be stuck there."

Although her years at Midwest University has not always been easy when she has visited her home at the reservation, Ayasha is happy that she has pursued her education at a university off the reservation. She firmly believes that the experiences and opportunities she has had at MU are different from the ones she would have received if she had attended a Tribal College back home. For her, MU has given her opportunities and experiences that she would otherwise have missed out on.

Introducing Lewa

Lewa is a female undergraduate student who identifies as Black. At the time of the interview, she was a junior majoring in business. She had lived in several states in the United

States, mostly on the East Coast, before moving to College Town when she was accepted to MU for her undergraduate studies. College Town was not her first choice and she was supposed to attend a University on the East Coast, but her mother got a job offer in the same state and wanted Lewa to stay closer to her. Although Lewa lives a couple of hours away from her mother, she travels there during breaks and has been working there during the summers. Before she became a student at MU she had never been to College Town, but her cousin lived not far away and had shared some of her thoughts with Lewa. For Lewa, being a minority student at Midwest University has not been a good experience and one of the first things she told me during our interview was that as soon as she graduates she wants to get out of College Town as quick as possible. When she was accepted she was excited about going to college, living at the dorms, and gaining new friends. However, during her freshman year she experienced a major racial incident where she was the target of racism from some of the people in her dorm she believed were her friends. Although she was a third year student at MU during our interview and has since gained other friends, this incident was still impacting her daily life.

While I had never met Lewa before our interview, it turned out that I had heard about her because of the racist incident she had been a victim of. We were introduced through a common acquaintance who hoped Lewa would agree to an interview and share some of her experiences at MU. When I approached her to ask if she would be interested in participating in this research, she agreed and said she was happy to share both her negative and positive experiences at Midwest University. Although I was familiar with the incident, I did not realize that this was Lewa's story until we sat down together to have our conversation. For me, Lewa's interview and her experiences as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution was the most challenging and heartbreaking interview in this research. She shared many stories and I explore several of them in this this chapter.

My interview with Lewa was one of the longer one in this study and I have chosen to re-tell the following stories because they seemed to describe the most about her experiences at MU and the consequences of being a minority student at a PWI. Three stories about her experiences of the campus climate are explored: the never-ending pain of racism, wanting to be accepted for who you are, and finding a place to breath in the midst of people who might never accept you or want you at their school.

It's a type of pain that will never go away.

Although Lewa originally had planned to attend a different university, she knew a lot about Midwest University before coming to College Town in the fall of 2016. She knew of their business program, percentage of students finding a job after graduating from MU, and their reasonable tuition prices. However, she also began MU after being warned about the university by her cousin who used to live in a neighboring town

> "She told me not to trust nobody. She's very open-minded and she says what she wants to say. So, she wasn't afraid to tell me like, 'People here are racist. They're not gonna be your friend, so don't accept them to be your friends' and stuff like that. And then she told me that the school is good, but there are a lot of things that aren't really advertised out in social media or out in the news because they're trying to keep that perfect image, but she knew people that was going here that told her stuff. So, she just passed that onto me."

Although her cousin had cautioned her about the campus climate, Lewa was determined to develop her own opinion about College Town and MU and her cousin's comments never stopped her from moving to MU

"…I didn't think about it like, "Oh, maybe I should listen. Maybe I shouldn't go." I was just set on, "I'm going to college. I know what I'm going for. I want to accomplish that and be done and I'm not gonna pay attention to what everybody says because I'm not about being part of the in crowd and stuff like that.""

When she moved to College Town she began her college career like most other undergraduate students; moving into the dorms, meeting new people, and having high expectations of her new life at college

"…when I first came here my first year, I thought I had this big image like, "Oh, my God. I'm gonna be living in the dorm. It's my first year of college. I'm gonna have some new friends. I'm gonna be open to people" and I was that. I have a positive attitude when I start something and then I don't start off negative and work my way up. I like to be lively and be happy with what I'm doing and then see where it goes from that."

While living in the dorms Lewa met new people and spent her daytime going to class and at night she and her friends at the dorm usually spent in the dorm room watching TV, talking, and laughing. However, one night some of her new friends turned on her on social media and she was part of a racially charged campus incident which was widely spread on social media and in the news. Lewa described the incident as something that has had permanent consequences for her

"I thought I met some great people from the beginning that was within my dorm and then things happened and it went downhill and that destroyed my self-esteem of myself. I've experienced racism when I first came to [this state], but that type of racism that I experience it just brought everything back telling me that I would never be wanted within this country or within this state and it hurts to feel stuff like that. It's a type of pain that

will never go away. I mean you can forget it today but tomorrow when you wake up it's still it's gonna come back and hit you in the face like somebody punching you."

When it happened, Lewa said she didn't know what to do or how to react before she met a friend of hers who had been made aware of the incident, "I met my friend and she's livid. She's like over the hills with it. She's cussing and she's trying to call administrators… and I'm just like I don't know. But that was the first racism I experienced [at MU]." However, despite meetings with the university administration and world-wide attention in social media and newspapers, no real consequences ever happened. Lewa was not surprised about the lack of consequences and said she knew the university was not going to do anything about it, "…because they have to retain that perfect image. So they just sweep in all underneath the rug and pretend… but if you come here, you'll know it's not all to that."

If they can't accept me, then why should I force myself into being what they are.

Despite having her first racist incident at Midwest University during the first semester of her college career, Lewa describes the University as being a good academic place to pursue your education. When she talks about her experiences at MU, there is a distinct difference between MU as an academic place and it's campus climate:

"I would say if you actually get to know people, there are a lot of people that won't accept you but you shouldn't let that stop you from going for what you want. Because there are some people on campus that will try to push you to become better than what you're seeking for. But don't let others' opinions stop you from following your dreams and doing what you think is right for you personally. [MU] as a whole, this school is really good."

Although she says the academic aspect of her major is good and that MU offers career fairs and recruitment fairs, she finds it difficult to be a minority student at MU. She describes the lack of diversity and being one of the few black students at a predominantly White school as something that impacts her experiences:

"I personally don't think that you have the opportunity of being yourself if you're within the minority. You're always gonna feel that people are judging you no matter what. So, you're not gonna have that room to say that, 'Oh, I can breathe freely without somebody watching me or saying stuff about me.' Especially in your classroom, let's say there are 75 people in the classroom and you look around. There's only like three black students within the classroom or three students that is not within the majority in your classroom. You're gonna feel left out. You're not gonna feel like you're needed, you're wanted, in that classroom."

Lewa describes MU and College town as places that do not easily accept minorities. She adds that some people will accept you for who you are, but the majority will not. She shares having had such experiences at her summer job in a neighbouring town, when she goes downtown, and when she walks to class. Although she initially came with expectations of having a different college experience, she has accepted that MU did not turn out to be the university she hoped:

"I can only speak for myself and for me, personally, my experience it's okay. It's not the best. It's not what I wanted, but I knew I wasn't gonna get it, but I hoped that I would get it. There's a lot I feel that the school, the community, can do to help make minority students feel welcome and they have the opportunity of doing it, but they're not going to do it and I know that and I have accepted that."

For Lewa, the lack of acceptance as a minority student on campus has made her identify stronger with her heritage as a black woman,

"I'm very accepting of who I am. I may have the American citizenship and stuff like that, but I know I would never be American. If they can't accept me, then why should I force myself into being what they are? So, I'm proud of my African heritage. I'm proud of what we've been through and how we've overcome with it and I'm forever gonna be happy."

Finding a Place to Breath.

Despite these experiences, Lewa has not considered transferring to a different university to finish her degree. She doesn't think College Town or Midwest University is going to change, because the few people she knows of that have tried has never been successful, "There are some people that try and they end up getting shut down by their own [White] people." Two years after the racially charged incident that happened in her dorm she tries to focus on the people she has met who have become her friends:

"…you just gotta keep going with your life and not worry about what people say and think about you. It's still gonna be back there in your memories forever, but after I felt that, I've met some great people that accepted me for me and it's not a lot of people, but just that little group and that little clique that made me feel like, "Oh, I am needed. I don't have to worry about what those other people say about me." It made me feel happy, but then not happy for a little time and then you go back to your own personal bubble and then everything just come back"

Although she says that she wants to move away from College Town as soon as she graduates, it seems as though she has found a way to continue through the remaining of her undergraduate career at MU:

"…don't pay attention to that aspect of whatever it is that's going on. Just pay attention to what you came to study. Being yourself, there are places on campus that you can go and feel like you're yourself."

For Lewa, resources on campus such as student associations, culture nights, and the Multicultural Center on campus has become places where she goes to meet her friends, eat lunch, hang out, or do homework. Within these resources she has found places where she can be herself and she speaks highly of the staff at the Multicultural Center on campus

"[names of staff] and other few people they care and you can see with a passion that they care for the minority students – especially the people that work in the[name of] Center. You see them caring for their kind, but they care more for other people than their kind and I cannot express how much happiness and joy that brings to me.

Although Lewa's years at Midwest University have been heavily impacted by her experiences during her freshman year, the friends she has made and the people she has met through the Multicultural Center seems to have made it possible for her to stay and finish her undergraduate career at the same University that treated her so badly. For her, the people she calls her friends and the places on campus she can go to be herself have made a huge impact on her life and supported her throughout these years.

Introducing Elena

Elena is a female undergraduate student who identifies as Hispanic. At the time of the interview, she was a junior and declared pre-law. Elena was adopted from South America as an infant and grew up in the Midwest. She moved to College Town when she got accepted to Midwest University to pursue her undergraduate studies. Although she was new to the state and

town when she came to MU, her father was an alumni which made the choice to attend the university easy. However, Elena's years at MU has been challenging as the lack of diversity is something she finds difficult and being one of few minority students in her courses is something she continues to battle with. For Elena, stereotypes and judgment from others and herself has impacted her experiences as a minority student at a PWI. However, she has also had positive experiences at the university and MU is one of the universities she is applying to for law-school. Having one year left to finish at MU, Elena is currently building her resume and application to MU and other law schools in the United States. She dreams of attending Columbia university before moving abroad to work.

I had never met Elena before our interview, but she was the other student that wanted to participate in the research after I visited the class of my former professor to speak about my study. What made me particularly excited that Elena was interested in participating in an interview was that she was the first and only Hispanic student I was able to interview for this study.

I explore several of Elena's stories about her experiences as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution: the challenges of attending a university that lacks diversity, being viewed and treated differently than her White peers, and the positive and negative consequences of being one of few minority students. I chose to re-tell these stories because they seemed to me to describe the most about Elena's experiences at Midwest University and in College Town.

Lack of Diversity.

Elena grew up in a neighboring state, only a couple of hours away from College Town. Her father is a MU alumni and her grandparents lives only an hour away, "…close enough where I can go to them but far enough where I won't go every weekend". Initially, Elena had looked at private schools closer to home when she began her search for colleges, but as she wants to attend law school she decided to look at public universities and MU became a natural choice because of her family history. Although her dad had been a student, Elena's knowledge of MU and College Town was limited. She knew it had an extensive Greek life community and was familiar with the sports team.

When Elena came to Midwest University for her first semester, she was surprised of the lack of diversity "I was thinking there would be a little more diversity for some reason." She also found the university to be different from the university in her hometown and although she liked the school, it was difficult for her to get to know people,

> "I would say [MU] is very unique. A lot of people here are in frats and sororities, so it's either you are in one or you're not. It is very polarized, I'd say. But [sport] is big. There is tons of ways to be involved which is nice, so you can still meet people. Because it is, I feel like it is harder to meet people when you're not in a frat or sorority, almost."

Finding friends when not being part of a sorority was challenging for Elena when she arrived at MU, but she found other parts of campus where she was able to meet people through student organizations and find friends outside of the Greek community. However, lack of diversity has continued to be a challenge for her and among her group of friends, she is the only one who identify as Hispanic,

"I don't know that many other people who are like Latina/Hispanic. Usually you can kind of tell if they are, like oh you are Hispanic because of your look or whatever. But, yeah, I don't have like a lot of interactions with them, which is kind of sad almost, because you want to like be by others who go through the same thing, so… but I don't know, I have a few in my classes… they are hard working."

Not knowing other Hispanic students and the lack of minority students on campus is something Elena finds difficult, "I always tell my parents I would like to see more diversity." Although she describes MU as a good place to be a student, she adds that the lack of diversity is something that continues to impact her experiences on campus,

"I feel like I go through like ebbs and flows of it. But, just being surrounded by people who aren't [Hispanic] and how they isn't a lot of diversity has been hard, because I am not involved in the frat and sorority life and I like don't really party that much. So that's been really hard."

Being one of few minority students has posed challenges both on campus and in the community, something that has colored Elena's experiences of both College Town and Midwest University.

Sometimes you get those looks.

In the community, she has found herself to be treated differently compared to individuals who are part of the majority population. It can be smaller signs such as people looking at her differently when she is grocery shopping, "I think sometimes you get like those looks. Like I have gotten those looks a few times, like I don't seem sketchy. But, I guess it just like depends on where you are and whose there." She describes the look as "…they will look at me like I am

about to steal something." But she has also noticed how people approach her and her Caucasian friends in different ways,

> "…lately I've been noticing one of my best friends, she's American, so whenever we are together and we are in social situations, people talk to her and not to me. I volunteered for the [local marathon]. So we had to go and get our shirts for that and [best friend] kind of dominated the conversation and I just kind of chipped in, but the woman directed her attention solely towards [best friend] so I've been finding that happening more often and I guess I would, just wasn't used to that but it's weird seeing how, like they glance to me in like once every while but, like I don't get the same attention as she does."

Although this was something Elena had recently been observing, she said that it also occurs on campus, "…I've been noticing that within the last month how teachers do that and every, like out in the community people do that, so… that's been a realization." She describes such instances as uncomfortable, "…how people look at me sometimes or the way they treat me makes me feel in superior almost." However, Elena says that this is something she thinks a lot of minority students experience in College Town and that others probably has it worse than her,

> "I feel like I get off pretty easy because I am lighter skinned. But you can still kind of tell, I am not from the US. But, yeah I think like the foreign, like the Chinese/Japanese students and the students who are like from the Middle East who are darker skinned, I feel like they would have a really tough time in some situations or some places."

Despite having some negative experiences on campus, Elena feels that being a minority on campus is easier compared to when she is out in the community,

> "Because all the students are here and they don't really like, look at you differently whereas out in the community they might. But there are a lot of church organizations and

others that try to be more inclusive, I think. So, yeah I definitely think it is easier on campus because it is a college."

However, as one of few minority students in her classes, Elena's experiences are different compared to her White peers.

Being "the voice" for the minority perspective.

In general, Elena describes her professors as inclusive of minority students and different perspectives. However, most of her peers and professors are White and she has found the lack of diversity in her classes to be challenging,

"I guess because in like classes too… a lot of the students are coming from perspectives that are just one-sided I guess, like their perspective. And it kind of dominates the discussion obviously. So it's been hard because usually I am one of the only people there who are like oh, but what about like third world countries or like the climate here or there."

Although Elena tries to speak up for the non-dominant perspective in class, she finds it challenging to go against the majority perspective and at times it is easier to go along with the rest of the class, "I think it is a little easier going along with them because then you don't have to fight like thirty people who think the same." Despite finding it easier, it is also challenging for her to not voice her own perspective

"I guess I'm like harder on myself because I tend to see myself adapting more of the majority students' mindset because there are more of them in the class, so that's a little frustrating I think because they are the dominant ones in the class, so instead of trying to say why don't we look at it from this way, I just kind of like join in sometimes."

Judging herself harder is something Elena feels is common among minority students, "in general I feel like we are almost harder on ourselves almost." She further explains

> "I feel like this is going off on a limb, but like I am horrible at studying and test-taking and so is my brother and he is from, he was adopted from [South American country] so I always associate me being from like a Hispanic country with my studying I guess. And then I look at [White] peers and I am like, oh they perform better because… I mean I do perform good but I have to put a lot of time into it and it can either go like really good or like, not so good. So I almost look at them like oh because their parents are probably well-off and smart and intelligent or whatever they will perform better. Whereas like I am pretty sure my, like, birth-mom was a maid or something. So I just kind of associate that with that."

Although she describes this as something she feels, she has heard comments such as "it just comes naturally to me" from White peers, which to her has confirmed what she already thinks about herself,

> "I feel like it is in my head but if so many White students are smart and getting good grades and everything and then you look at like the minority students who need to put in extra effort and like don't always do so well, it just kind of collides together."

She also describes reactions from others when she has shared poor test results as something that confirms the way she already thinks about herself,

> "If I don't do well on a test or something else and I tell someone that, I have gotten a few looks, I've been kind of like, not a look that I should be getting. Not really from professors, more from peers. Because you don't perform as well as them or something."

However, despite the challenges of being one of few minority students at MU, Elena has experienced that there are also benefits to being different from the majority population in her classes,

> "I do like being a minority student, obviously there are like some difficulties but, I think you do kind of get a lot of opportunities like for my major, my professor recommended me to go to this conference on foreign affairs last spring so I think being a minority you do get more opportunities, and obviously it is not only based on me being that."

She also says that MU and the state has a reputation of good work ethic, which might be beneficial for her when she applies for law school and work in the future. Despite this, she would prefer to go somewhere else for her law degree "Columbia would be amazing. Just because I love the East Coast and I feel like it is more diverse out there... So hopefully there. I will probably apply here anyway, but hopefully moving after [completing her undergraduate degree]." When thinking about her life after law school, Elena's goal is to live abroad in Europe or Central America where she was adopted from and will probably not come back to College Town to live,

> "I thought about it before, I think [College Town] is a very unique city, it's kind of hard because my goal is to live abroad, so... I feel like there is always more opportunities in the bigger cities to be involved in different organizations and everything. And [College Town] just doesn't really have that so... that's like kind of the drawback."

For Elena, the years at Midwest University has had its pros and cons, but the overall challenge for her seems to have been the lack of diversity and the consequences of being one of the few non-White students on campus. Although she looks back at her time at MU with both positive and negative memories, her future plans will likely take her away from the town and university to places with more diversity.

Introducing Bayani

Bayani is a male graduate student who identifies as Asian American. At the time of the interview he had just graduated with his masters and was currently working part-time while applying for jobs. Although he was not born in College Town, he moved there as a young child because his father was in the military. Bayani has lived most of his life in the town before he became a student at Midwest University and views it as his hometown. He enjoyed both his undergraduate and graduate years at the university and is very fond of both MU and College Town, he spoke highly of both during our interview. For him, being close to family was important in his choice of university and this is also one of the reasons he still resides in town. He wants to stay in College Town until his youngest sibling graduates from high school and is looking at jobs in the Southern United States starting next fall.

I had met Bayani once before our interview, we had a mutual acquaintance and I had previously participated in a study he was part of during his masters. I approached him to ask if he would be interested in participating in this research during his last semester at MU and the interview took place when he had just graduated with his masters degree. Finding students for this research who identified as Asian Americans were more challenging than expected and I was very excited that Bayani wanted to participate.

I explore several of Bayani's stories about his experiences as a minority student at Midwest University, how he considers College Town his home, finding friends amongst a diverse group of students, and his strong belief in equality and equal treatment. The interview with Bayani was among the longer ones in this study and I chose to re-tell these stories because I believe they describe the most about his experiences during his years at MU.

I consider myself a townie.

Although he was born on the East Coast, Bayani moved to College Town with his family when he was six years old. This is where he went to elementary-, middle-, and high school before applying to Midwest University for his undergraduate degree, "I've lived here pretty much my whole life, in all of my adult life so far, so I consider myself a townie, I guess." Growing up in College Town, MU was a familiar place for Bayani

> "I mean I pretty much grew up here, so I was always kind of around the campus and kinda liked [Midwest University], its presence in town so that was… so I knew a little bit about it and then since I'm a local resident financially it makes more sense to stay and go to a college that is five minutes from my parents' house. So, financially it made sense to do that."

For Bayani, staying in College Town for his university education was an easy decision and he enjoys living there. However, being so close to home has been hard at times when people he met complained about the small city life of College Town.

> "They come up here for school and they complain that it's so cold up here and there's nothing to do and all that stuff, so when I hear that it does kinda irk me a little bit because it's like – I mean you're up here for school and I understand that you want to have fun and do that stuff, but you shouldn't continue bashing the city that I grew up in and stuff like that. So, sometimes you kinda want to be – you take it as a little bit of a – as offensive, but you try to just let it go and just maybe try to understand their frustration with maybe what they're used to and now what this is what they have to deal with I guess for four years or however their long they're here. "

Although he recognizes that it might be difficult for people to adjust to a smaller town with fewer options for entertainment and activities, he thinks it is a good town for college students. He believes that when students leave College Town after graduation, they leave "a little part of their heart" behind. Even if they say they can't wait to get out, he thinks "…they always have a soft spot for [College Town] just because they come here for school and then you meet people and you make friends and stuff like that."

Friends who look like me, friends who don't look like me.

When Bayani started applying for colleges, he did not have any particular expectations of MU but he

"…just figured it'd be like any other college. You go to class, you study for your tests, you do your projects, you meet people, you try to have some fun, participate in all the activities that they have for students and then you graduate and then you move on."

As he began his freshman year, he got to know the college and campus better and tried "to take advantage of things that the campus offered." For Bayani, the years he spent at MU was very rewarding and he had good experiences while he was a student. Going to college became an opportunity to meet all kinds of people, both different and similar to himself

"I have friends and I've interacted with people who are like me, who look like me, who have the same background, but I've also interacted with people who don't look like me, who don't have the exact same background, who don't have the same viewpoint on everything, but I'm okay with that."

Although Bayani has a couple of good friends who also identify as Asian Americans, he has never purposefully tried to find people with the same background as him "…me personally I

don't have the need to always hang out with people who are like me." As a student at MU, he became familiar with the Filipino student organization and attended some of their events, but he was never a member of the organization,

"I haven't been directly involved in anyway. I've kinda gone to their culture nights a few times, and just kinda seeing what they have and how they talk about and portray the country, and they do a good job. It's nice to see that and there are usually a lot of people."

However, he recognizes the importance of student organizations on campus and he thinks highly of what such organizations have to offer for minority students on campus,

"there's different organizations and stuff where they maybe they can get together with people who have that same background, so they can bond over that. Sometimes you – sometimes people just get homesick or something so it's nice to have people who understand your background, your culture more because they've lived it. So, you can kind of negate some of that homesickness that way."

He also adds that for him, being born in the United States and having lived almost his whole life in College town has made the American culture what he is most familiar with. He thinks that he might have felt differently if he had been born somewhere else or was unfamiliar with the American culture,

"I'm sure there are some people who are way more comfortable being around people who are just like them, both in appearance and background because they just either feel way more comfortable with that or maybe they've experienced some sort of situation where their background or their ethnicity was used against them, so they automatically go towards people who are like them."

Bayani thinks that the presence of student organizations is valuable both for the minority students who identify with the organization and for the rest of the campus as an arena to learn about diversity and other cultures;

> "I think it's good to have the students that are proud of their background, proud of their culture and they go out and advocate I guess for it or show it off to people. It's like we're proud of where we're from and if you would like to experience that you're more than welcome to come to our culture nights or whatever it is."

We should be treated the same.

During his years at Midwest University, Bayani completed both his undergraduate and graduate degree. For him, both College Town and the university were welcoming places and he has met a lot of nice people throughout the years. "I've enjoyed both my undergrad and grad years at the university. It's been good." For him, being a minority student at MU or in College Town has never been an issue and he thinks most minority students has similar experiences

> "I haven't heard of any terrible stories or anything where or even firsthand experiences or people I know that have just been ostracized because of where they're from or what they think or their background. So, I feel like for the most part it's pretty welcoming."

Although he adds that there is always going to be different experiences and opinions, he hopes MU continues to be a welcoming place for all students. During his years at MU he was always treated well and his ethnicity was never an issue

> "…what my background is and what I look like hasn't determined how people treat me. You know, I'm given the same expectations as any of my other classmates. People see me,

they don't talk to me differently, they don't treat me differently, and I treat everyone else the same way. No matter what they look like or where they're from."

In his experience, Midwest University is a place that "are doing what they can to make sure people feel welcome and that they – everybody receives the same experience." He emphasizes that he thinks it is important that all students are treated the same by the university's administration and professors, regardless of background,

> "You shouldn't be treated, I don't know, I guess you shouldn't be, in my opinion, you shouldn't be – what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know, given extra attention just because you are from somewhere different, you should be treated the same just like everyone else. You shouldn't be given more attention or less attention based on where you're from or what your background is. Like me and someone else who's from a completely different part of the world come to this campus, we should be treated the same."

For Bayani, this is also how he was treated during his years at Midwest University, both by his peers and professors. The majority of his professors have been "…good at giving everybody the adequate attention that they need and treating everybody the same."

> At the time of the interview, Bayani had just graduated with his masters and was looking for full-time employment. He hoped to stay in College Town until his sister had graduate high school in the spring and then move further South to work. When he was thinking back at his years at MU, he concluded that he had a very good experience as a both an undergraduate and graduate student

> "I've always been treated with respect. I haven't had any issues that are alarming, especially dealing with my background or anything like that, what I look like. Everyone who I met has been nice. I mean it could be just how I conduct myself. I don't expect

anybody to treat me any different based on what I look like, or where I'm from. Sometimes people do get curious and they ask me, "Where are you from?" or "What's your ethnicity?" and I tell them. And usually they're like, "Oh, that's pretty cool," whatever. And then I like to ask them, even though they're White or Caucasian or whatever. Not everyone is from the same area, so I like to find out where they're from. So, it's been good so far. Hopefully, it continues. I know it's not gonna be perfect, it's never gonna be perfect with everything, but hopefully, the majority of it is positive for students going forward and just do your best and in today's world it can be hard at times, but you just gotta hope for the best."

For Bayani, the years at Midwest University were good and in his experience, most students have a good time at MU. For him, he hoped for the typical college experience and it seems as though his conclusion is that these expectations were met during both his undergraduate and graduate career at the university.

Introducing Chimalis

Chimalis is a female graduate student who identifies as Native American. At the time of the interview she had just graduated with her Ph.D. from Midwest University and was currently working full-time in College Town where she lives with her husband and children. Chimalis grew up on a reservation a couple of hours away from College Town and lived there until she got accepted at MU as an undergraduate student. She was a student at Midwest University for both her undergraduate, masters degree, and doctoral degree. For Chimalis, the years at MU have been filled with both positive and negative experiences. Coming to College Town as an undergraduate student was a big culture shock for her and her undergraduate years were challenging. However,

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as she began her masters' program she gradually gained more confidence, friends, and she liked grad school a lot better than her undergraduate years.

Like Imani, I knew Chimalis from a class we had taken together while we were both Ph.D. students. We kept in touch and I initially approached her about possibly participating in this research after I had proposed in the early fall of 2017. I was eager to talk with Chimalis as she was the participant in this research who had been at student at Midwest University the longest. When we sat down to do the interview she had just defended her dissertation and had recently began a full-time job in town.

My interview with Chimalis was the longest one in this study and there are many stories she told that I could have included in this inquiry. Many of her experiences at MU and in College Town are similar to experiences she has had other places as well, but not all of these have been included in this narrative. I chose to re-tell the following stories because they seemed to describe the most about her experiences at the Predominantly White Institution and in College Town. Three stories about her experiences of the campus climate at MU are explored: her journey to Midwest University, facing stereotypes about Native Americans on and off campus, and her firm belief that education is the key to battling racism and stereotypes against minority students.

Her Journey.

For the first 19 years of her life, Chimalis lived on the reservation she was born. She attended school in her reservation community and was one of the best students in her class, with straight A's and she was the school's valedictorian when she graduated high school. She described her home as a place where almost everyone is Native Americans and knows each other:

"…back home, it's more, everybody's like you. You know all the families, you know people. And no matter what happens there, once you hit that reservation line, you feel safe. You feel like these people are going to take care of you because you're all connected by your culture, that you're from that tribal community. So, you're like this big family I feel like."

When she came to College Town, on the other hand, she describes it as a culture shock. After spending her first college semester close to home at the Tribal Community College, she transferred to Midwest University to study business. She had wanted to attend Midwest University ever since she was a little girl because of family members who had attended MU previously. When arriving at MU, she went from being an outgoing student who was the first one to speak in class, comfortable with public speaking, and competing in science fair competitions outside of school. She became intimidated by the university atmosphere "…and so, I became really shy and I just wanted to blend in with everybody. I didn't want to ask questions in class because I thought 'Oh maybe they would think it was a stupid question'". She came to MU knowing others who had bad experiences being a Native American student at MU and described how she wondered how people would react when they found out she was Native American:

"So, then sometimes I just felt like, I don't know, people judged me based off of that sometimes. And I know I shouldn't have felt that way, so then sometimes it made me feel inferior, so I think that's why I was kind of struggling. That was part of it. I was really homesick too. That played a roll. But I think I, like I said, felt inferior to everyone else because I felt like, "Oh, I'm just this Native American girl." And I felt like less. But that was just personally. Sometimes myself making me feel that way. So, yeah. So, I struggled grade wise and things. And it was really tough. It was one of the toughest things, I guess, I have gone through."

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Chimalis described how she not only struggled personally but also with her classes and grades. After graduating with her undergraduate degree, she never thought she would be able to pursue a masters degree, but with the support from a director of a department at MU she was able to be admitted to the program and she excelled in her masters' program. As a graduate student, she liked the smaller class size and with support from some of her professors she continued on to pursue her doctoral degree,

> "I liked my grad school years way better than my undergrad years. Like I said, undergrad I was kind of, like, blending in. But as I got older and matured more, being in those smaller classes I didn't feel as intimidated."

The support from her department and professors was something Chimalis spoke highly of during the interview. Several of them focused on Native Americans in the classes she took from them;

> "They always seemed to have a focus on Native American topics, and things, and to try to really educate people, our students, about the background and history of Native People, and education. So, I thought that was really good. I even learned things myself, even though I'm Native American, I really learned a lot more about boarding school experiences. And some things are emotional. I felt a lot of emotion when I was reading things, but I was really grateful that even though I'm Native American and probably should know that history myself, that it just built off of my knowledge that I had before the classes. So, it was really helpful."

However, despite the inclusion of Native American topis and history in her graduate classes, this was something Chimalis did not experience in her undergraduate years or elsewhere on campus or in town. Her experiences of stereotypes, prejudice, and racism at both Midwest University and in College Town has made her concerned with regards to the future of her children who are growing up in College Town.

"My only concern, my mom mentioned this to me before, is with my [children] attending school. One of my [children] is kind of blondish-brown hair, blue eyes, lighter skin, but then my other child has the darker hair, darker eyes, and skin's more like olive color, which my family jokes around, "Oh, this is your native baby. [oldest child] looks more like his dad." But that's the only concern I have is, I don't want my kids going to school facing that… My mom feels they're gonna know [youngest child] is, whereas [oldest child] probably won't face that same thing. But [oldest child] is obviously, I think, gonna defend [youngest child], and then once people find out they're both Native American that there could be some issue with students when they get older."

Chimalis wonders if her children's generation will face the same issues as she has experienced at MU and in College Town. She described expecting the university climate to be different than other schools and more culturally diverse. "I was being optimistic that it wouldn't be that type of climate because I thought, like I said, being a university and college, that it would be more culturally diverse." Instead, she came to Midwest University and found it to be less diverse than expected and shared her experiences of having to be the voice of Native Americans, battling stereotypes, prejudice, and racism both on and off campus.

Them? I am them.

When Chimalis talks about her time at Midwest University and in College Town, she shared stories of different experiences where she has faced stereotypes and racism towards Native Americans. When she describes her years at MU they are filled with instances where people have made remarks, comments or acted a certain way before finding out that she is Native American; "In my experience living here, there are a lot of experiences that I had where people didn't know

I was Native American, and they would say a lot of derogatory negative things about native people." She shares having had such experiences when standing in line at grocery stores, at her husbands' work, her own work, from friends, and in class.

> "…one day during break I was sitting there, and I don't know if they knew I was within hearing distance, but there was about three or four students standing in the hall talking who were in our class, and they said, 'Yeah, I wish I was Native American.' And the one girl was like, 'Oh, because you'd just get everything for free and handed to you?' And he was just like, 'Yeah.' And I was just like, 'Okay, so they have this misperception that we get all these things for free, and we just get handouts all the time.' Which is totally not true because, I mean, they must be sending me student loan bills by mistake then because I don't know I just I don't like that misperception that we get all these handouts, or we expect it, and we don't have to work for anything. It shouldn't have affected me the way that It did, but it did just because I thought I had the respect of my classmates, and then that kind of felt like I didn't. Because then I thought, "What else do they think when I'm not around." Because I was the only native student in the class. So, it was just really disappointing."

Derogatory comments about Native Americans has been common in her years at MU and in College Town. She describes feeling judged and having to defend herself by working harder "Like even just being a native person and feeling less than other people in this community. Feeling like I have to work extra hard to prove my worth, or who I am, and that I can do this." But even after completing her doctoral degree and having a successful career, Chimalis is still faces with stereotypes, even from friends:

"Because I even had friends that [story about a settlement her reservation received]. And I was telling my friend about it, and she goes, 'I'm so sick of them always getting these things.' It's like, 'Them? I am them. I am Native American.' And she's like, 'No, I don't mean it that way.' And I'm like, 'Well, how did you mean it, then?' even people that are your friends think that way. And that gets to be hard."

Comments such as these has made Chimalis both tired at having to explain and made her passionate about explaining to make people understand more about Native Americans. However, she has been faced with comments such as her being sensitive when trying to correct professors speaking about American Indian topics and saying something wrong. She has also experienced professors trying to challenge her thinking about being Native Americans and how she should feel and wanting to tell them "I lived it, so I know." She explains that such incidents, with both professors and students, as well as off-campus, is difficult to constantly face: "…those things make me uncomfortable. And I think, 'Why am I the one uncomfortable when they're the one doing something wrong?'"

Education is key.

Despite all of these experiences, Chimalis thinks that other Native Americans have experience worse that she has and states that "I think I had a mild form of those experiences compared to others because I've heard some of the stories, and just being the way they were treated, some of them." She also thinks that there is always going to be some form of racism in College Town and at Midwest University, "I think it's a [Midwest State] thing, yeah. I really do." Despite the large population of Native Americans in the state, she thinks it has the opposite effect

and created more negative stereotypes. However, she suggests education as a key to battling those stereotypes and racism:

"I think if there are incidences I think the offender should have to take a class on Native American history and learn more about Native people and the background and why things happened so they have a better understanding, so maybe it'd be like a lightbulb come on and they could say, 'Okay. Now I understand why they're sensitive to this. Or why this was disrespectful.' So, I think just maybe educating people more."

She also suggest implementing some form of minority or cultural diversity class when students first come to MU. Overall, she believes that any changes that targets racism or stereotypes has to come from the administration level "because they're the ones that have to change policy for what needs to be done in terms of those cultural diversity trainings and things like that because they make policy." Chimalis views knowledge, both as required courses for students and faculty, as well as educating people in general about minority students, their history and background, as an important way to get rid of subtle racism such as stereotypes and uneducated comments. She hopes that this might be one way to avoid that Native American children, such as her own, don't have to face the same experiences as she has had when they pursue their college education in the future.

Introducing Datu

Datu is a male undergraduate student who identifies as Asian American. At the time of the interview he was junior at Midwest University. Datu grew up in the Midwest and moved to College Town when he got accepted to MU for his undergraduate studies. For Datu, Midwest University was his number one choice because of the field he is going into after he graduates.

MU is one of the top universities in this area and his main focus when he looked at universities in high school was to find a school that specialized in the field he was interested in. Although Datu's main focus is academics, several of the student organizations on campus has become important for him. His overall experiences at MU and in college town has been good, but he is excited to graduate and hopefully move to a bigger city.

While I had never met Datu before being introduced by a common friend, I had heard about him in my initial discussions with our friend. When I approached him to ask him if he would be interested in participating in this research he was very interested in the topic and happy to share his experiences as a minority student at Midwest University and in College Town.

Datu told me about his decision to attend Midwest University despite having to move to a smaller town than his home town, finding friends, cultural and language barriers faced by some minority students who study at Predominantly White Universities, and his dreams for the future.

Lets just stay here and focus on school.

Datu was born in a neighboring state not far away from College Town. When he began looking for colleges he decided on Midwest University because it is one of the top universities for his major in the United States. Although College Town is located only 4-5 hours away from where he grew up, the small city life was a change compared to his hometown. He grew up in a big city and was used to a busier life with more activities and attractions. However, the smaller and more quiet town has been a pleasant surprise for Datu, "I would say academically wise… it has been very good for me just because I get to focus on what I need to do." He also added living in a town with fewer things to do has been good because there is "…not too much temptations. I

think it is good for me. Especially at this time of my life, so it is like get your stuff done and then you can do that after."

When Datu came to MU, he decided that his focus was going to be on his academics and did not participate in many of the welcome activities,

> "For myself I didn't really go out as much as more of the other people here would just because I focus on school. So I was like, I guess I wasn't… I didn't include myself in more of the welcoming stuff really."

Although his mindset was to "lets just stay here and focus on school," Datu still found MU to be a friendly place even for those who were less involved in the welcoming activities during his first semester. He joined several student organizations, ranging from sports clubs to clubs related to his major. In addition, he also became part of the Korean culture club and the Filipino club.

Finding friends.

Even though Datu knew a lot about the Midwest University's reputation for his particular major, he did not know a lot about the university when he moved to College Town to begin his undergraduate career. "I didn't know that much. However, I just knew it was cold up here… And I knew it was very small, or the town itself was pretty small." He also said he expected it to be a quiet and boring town, but these expectations did not stop him from attending MU "I just came, pretty much, I was like [major] is why I am coming here for." As he got to know the university and town, Datu has found it to be a welcoming and good place to be a student. For him, it gave him a chance to focus on his studies while also gradually spending more time within student organizations and clubs that relates to his interest. For him, the quiet town has given him a chance to find people similar to himself,

"because it is a quiet town and then you get to find yourself and find people that is alike.

So since it is a small town you might get to know a lot [more] people since it is really

closed."

Although he initially came with a wish to focus on school, he spends his time split between school, work, and his student organizations. Despite being more involved on campus that he initially thought, he views the student life at MU as divided between those who decides to focus on school and those who spends more time socializing. In general, he thinks most students

"…get to experience new things, especially if they were coming from [a bigger city] you

would get to try the quiet campus life and stuff like that. Or you could try the party life.

So I think there are two different ways you can go."

For Datu, the Filipino student organization and the Korean culture club have been ways for him to be involved on campus in areas of diversity and to find friends. The student organizations were not very visible when he first arrived on campus, but he found them when he tried to look for areas to be involved that aligned with his major and background. He said that finding them "was pretty easy, just becase it was my interest so I pretty much made an effort to find them." Even though his focus has continued to be mostly on his academics, the organizations have been places that made him feel welcome on campus, "…I would say it is pretty friendly because of the clubs I have been in they were pretty welcoming."

More difficult for minority students.

Although Datu has been able to find a group of friends among the student organizations he has joined, he believes it might be more difficult for minority students to feel welcomed on

campus. After two years at Midwest University he views the student population as split between those who are welcoming and those who are not,

"Because there are some students that are willing to meet new people… and then some are very, I want to say conservative in mind where they stick with what they are used to and then if there are something new that they are trying to… or they see, they kind of stray off of it."

Datu also thinks that because he was born in the United States, it has been easier for him to attend Midwest University because he is more familiar with the American culture "because I am more Americanized" than minority students at MU who are born in a different country. He believes he might have had a harder time transitioning to life in College Town and at MU if he had been a transfer student because of the language and cultural barriers that exist for them,

"I think they do have a difficult time as in maybe language barriers… and culture barriers. And then for them to leave most of their original behaviors and cultures behind and coming here, I think that might be a big change for them. Asian Americans, we are kind of used to… more of the American lifestyle."

However, he says that over the years he has been at MU, the faculty in his department have been very helpful to students who need more help, "in the [his major] department I think they've been doing great just because they have to work with a lot of transfer students… and then for other departments I think they are doing good too."

Although he thinks the majority of students have positive experiences on campus, he pointed out that "maybe some certain cultures and religions might be a little difficult to express in some areas around here." Even though he didn't have any specific cultures or religions, he said that the political nature in College Town and at MU might make it more difficult for people who

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are different from the majority population, "I think most people here around are very conservative… I feel like if they see something not what they are used too, I guess they would be kind of shocked." Despite describing College Town as conservative, Datu has found it to be very friendly. He works part-time at a local restaurant and describes the town as a good place to work

> "I would say it is pretty welcoming, it is a pretty nice place. People up here are pretty
>
> nice. Especially working at [name of restaurant], people come in and they are like oh hi.
>
> And they actually wanna talk to you."

His workplace has become a place where he has met people from the community who are interested in his background and culture, something he appreciates.

Not Staying in College Town.

Because of the requirements of his major, Datu has a couple of years with extra requirements after he graduates. When he thinks about the future and his life in College Town he doesn't picture himself living there beyond his college education, "Well I do know that I technically have to stay for maybe another one or two years [after graduation] and then after that I don't think I am going to stay here." Although he keeps his hometown as an option, he dreams of the big city life, "I think it is either probably moving back to [home state] or maybe the bigger cities like New York or out by the West Coast. I don't know yet." When asked why he doesn't want to stay in College Town he mentions a vacation he had during the past year, "I want to say more like the city life I guess, like New York because I have been there this summer and I was just like, yeah this is my type of city." For Datu, the years at MU has been important to him because the university offers one of the top programs in the country for the field he wants to work

in. Although he has enjoyed his time at MU and still have a couple years left, he is excited to move to a bigger city and pursue his career after he graduates.

Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter

This narrative account of eight minority students' experiences of the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution spans from the time before they became students at Midwest University, their experiences as students, and their dreams and plans for the future. In this chapter, I have re-told several of the stories each student shared during our interviews, where they look back at their years at MU, forward to their future after MU, and at the place they have all been minority students, the Predominantly White Institution being explored in this research.

This chapter presented the major findings of this research. A narrative methodology was utilized to tell the stories shared by each participant in the study. The students vary in their ethnic/racial affiliation and their experiences. Some have had positive experiences both at the university and in College Town, while others have had negative experiences. What they all have in common is their status as a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution and the individual stories they tell reflects their uniqueness.

Chapter five will present the summary of the stories, relating the participants' stories to each other, the overall campus, as well as the literature on minority students at Predominantly White Institutions. The contributions of this research to the current literature will be outlined, along with its implications for Predominantly White Institutions and their campus climate. The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of the research and how future research should explore the experiences of minority students who attend Predominantly White Institutions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a summary of the findings is presented, the stories of the eight students are connected together into a bigger conversation. The eight students' voices are woven into a discussion with the previous research and literature on minority students' experiences at Predominantly White Institutions. A section is provided on how this dissertation contributes to the current literature, as well as the implications this research has for Predominantly White Institutions and minority students. Lastly, the limitations of the research are presented and the areas future research should examine related to Preliminary White Institutions are explored.

A Conversation

This study explored how eight minority students experience the campus climate at a Predominantly White Institution. A narrative approach was utilized to enable the eight students to share their stories. The use of a narrative approach makes it important to understand and analyze the stories told by the participants as whole or bigger parts (Riessman, 2008), however, this chapter makes it possible to put the students' individual stories together and view them as one big conversation about the campus climate at Midwest University.

Being a Minority Student at a Predominantly White Institution.

With Midwest University being a Predominantly White Institution, the lack of diversity is perhaps not a surprising element in several of the experiences of the students in the study. Being the only non-White in the classroom was a common experience among the students in this story. As described by Elena, Chimalis, Kimimela, Ayasha, and Lewa, being the only non-White

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student in the classroom has an impact on the dynamics between students and professor, such as the perspectives on topics discussed and feeling as one has to be an advocate for the minority perspective. However, even when minority students voice their opinions and perspectives in the classroom, it might not be met with understanding from the White students in the classroom or the professors. As described by Kimimela, "some beliefs, not everyone can understand." Their experience is similar with what past research has found when examining the experiences of non-White students at PWIs. Research is consistent in their findings that PWIs tend to promote norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, views, and practices that are more aligned with their White student population (Castillo et al., 2004; Chang, 2002; Evans & Feagin, 2010; Gusa, 2010).

However, not all of the students in this study found this to be a negative experience. Bayani firmly believes that all students at a university should be treated the same and that minority students should have the same expectations and treatment as White students. He said that no student should be "…given extra attention just because you are from somewhere different, you should be treated the same just like everyone else." For Bayani, the amount of attention and similar treatment was more important than perhaps the perspective of conversation, values, or beliefs promoted by professors and peers. Additionally, although he specified that he only identifies as Asian American, Bayani shared that his father is White and this, paired with growing up in College Town, could explain his viewpoints and familiarity with a predominantly White environment such as Midwest University. Bayani's adjustment to the PWI and lifestyle could perhaps also explain why his sense of belonging seemed to be stronger than the other seven students in the study, as minority students at PWIs in past research have been found to have a weaker sense of belonging compared to their White peers (Johnson et al., 2007).

Although the students in this study had eight different experiences of the campus climate at Midwest University, all except for the two Asian American students, Bayani and Datu, talked

about standing out as the only minority student in the classroom or social situations. For Elena, the Latina student, and Lewa, the Black undergraduate student, being a minority student at MU meant getting looks from the majority population on campus, standing out and being treated differently both on campus and in the community. This could be because Asian American students' experiences have been found to be impacted by cultural challenges such as being pressured to assimilate into the dominant culture (Lewis et al., 2000; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Datu spoke of this when he compared himself to other minority students who he believed might struggle because they have language and cultural barriers. He spoke of himself as being more adjusted in a predominantly White environment, "Asian Americans, we are kind of used to… more of the American lifestyle." Bayani also reflected on this and his ability to interact with different kinds of people, "I've interacted with people who are like me… I've also interacted with people who don't look like me, who don't have the exact same background, who don't have the same viewpoint on everything, but I'm okay with that." For the two Asian American students in this study, it seemed as perhaps they were used to predominantly White environments prior to attending a PWI and entering college was therefore less of an adjustment compared to the other students in the study.

The ability to be yourself when you are a minority student attending a Predominantly White Institution is difficult; compared to their White peers, racial minority students have more barriers to social support (Castellanos, 2016; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Hannon et al., 2016), less cultural familiarity, expression, and validation (Castellanos, 2016; Guiffrida, 2003; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010), and identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Lewis & McKissic, 2010). The difficulties with being yourself as a minority student at a PWI were also an important part of the experiences of several of the students in this study. Lewa said that she believed no minority student can be him- or herself fully on a campus where you are not part of the majority

population and both Kimimani and Ayasha shared that there are certain aspects and issues that non-Native students can't fully understand and they adjust their behavior and/or conversations accordingly. Imani brought up how minority students needs to adjust their behavior and do some coding in order to not be stereotyped by the other students on campus, "…like especially like for black people, you don't want to be perceived as ghetto or loud or something like that." For Elena, being Latina at MU was especially difficult because she never met many other Latina/o student, "…I don't have a like a lot of interactions with them, which is kind of sad almost, because you want to be by others who go through the same thing." The lack of other Latina/o peers at MU made it more challenging for Elena to fully be herself and have others to relate to.

According to Kaufman (2014), the experience of attending college is a social experience or a social process, and any college, including the Predominantly White Institution in this study, should be seen "…as a social institution where students' identities are constructed through social interaction" (Kaufman, 2014, p. 37). As this study revealed, there are a range of experiences among racial minority students who attend a PWI and these experiences are multi-dimensional and complex. Although I viewed identity as something that is constantly changing before my conversations with the students in this study, I expected that a large part of their identity would be tied to the racial background they identified with. However, there seems to be great variation in how the students viewed their own identity and the emphasis they place on their racial background. Through the stories the students told, their emphasis on certain experiences or details highlighted the complexity of their identities. For some, their identity was closely connected to where they were from (Bayani and Imani), their major (Elena, Ayasha, Kimimela, and Datu), being a sorority member (Ayasha), not being a member of a sorority (Elena), their plan for the future (Lewa), and their family (Kimimela, Elena, Bayani, and Chimalis). For some, their experiences at the PWI had strengthened their connection to their racial background. Lewa

said that her negative experiences at MU made her even more proud of her African heritage and what her ancestors had overcome, while Elena said that the lack of other Latina/o students at MU was very visible and she missed having someone who could understand and relate to this part of her identity. Although an important part of the students' identities were tied to their racial identity and being one of few non-White students at MU made their minority status more visible, the stories they told illustrated how being Asian American, Black, Latina, or Native American is only one aspect of their multifaceted identity.

Resources for Minority Students at PWIs.

In this study, all eight students shared stories where they mentioned different forms of resources for minority students at Midwest University. They varied in their emphasis of how important the resources had been for their experiences at the university, but all agreed on their value on campus. For the Native American students in this study, all three spoke highly of the specific resources for Native Americans on campus, especially the Native American Center. The three students varied in the extent of their use of the resources, for Kimimela, the resources had provided her with access to friends, a sense of belonging, and a physical space to spend time. For Ayasha, the physical resources on campus were less important for her own experience on campus, but she greatly appreciated their existence for other Native students. She did, however, utilize the resources for Native American medical students. All three students spoke with much enthusiasm about the annual Powwow that is arranged on campus. Not only did this provide them with a sense of home and caring for traditions, but they also viewed it as a learning opportunity for non-Native students and community members to learn more about Native American culture.

In a similar manner, the two Asian American students in this study spoke highly of the Asian student organizations on campus and the culture nights. While Bayani was not directly involved, Datu was member of two organizations and participated in the culture nights. For him, these resources gave him an opportunity to get to know other students on campus that shared his culture and background. Lewa and Imani, who both identified as Black, also agreed on the importance of student organizations and resources for minority students, but they varied greatly in their participation. Whereas Imani had not attended any events or joined any organizations, Lewa had been able to find her place on campus and find friends who accepted her. Elena, the Latina student, was not a member of a student organization, nor did she participate in culture nights or utilize the Multicultural Center. Although there is a student organization for Latina/o students on campus, it is not an active organization and Elena expressed the lack of other Latina/o students on campus as disappointing. However, she agreed with the other students that such resources are of great value for minority students at PWIs.

Although all eight participants described resources such as student organizations and culture nights as having some form of educational purpose on campus (e.g., the Native American Center educating students about Native American history and Korean Culture Night educating students about Korean culture), not everyone mentioned this as being key to battling racism or stereotypes at Midwest University. The students also seemed to vary in their awareness of diversity training and missions on campus.

Past literature indicates that most universities and colleges today have intensified their diversity missions (Williams & Clowney, 2007; Wilson et al., 2012). At Predominantly White Institutions like Midwest University, resources for minority students exist in physical spaces of Multicultural Centers and Native American Centers, as well as other initiatives such as diversity officers, student organizations, and culture nights. However, previous research has questioned the

seriousness of such initiatives and whether such resources are simply "token-initiatives" that in reality do not lead to an increase in the inclusion or well-being of minority students (Bensimon, 2005; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maldonado et al., 2005). Similar to the questioning of the seriousness of diversity missions by past research (Bensimon, 2005; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Maldonado et al., 2005), some of the participants in this study also voiced their uncertainty of whether MU did enough to foster positive environments for minority students at the school. When sharing her experiences of how the university administration handled the racist incident she was a victim of, Lewa said that there were some university officials who tried to speak on her behalf but were shut down by the administrators. She also questioned the sincerity of MU's diversity mission when the chief diversity officer quit his/her position and the position disappeared and was not replaced. Students like Kimimela, Chimalis, and Imani described lack of diversity training as an important flaw in the university's promotion of diversity and suggested such training as something that could help both students and faculty learn more about diversity and battle racism and stereotypes. Their view on the positive impact of diversity training is similar to what past research has found. In a review of literature on diversity training on campuses, it was found that such training has the potential to increase knowledge about diversity, change attitudes towards diversity, and develop skills relevant to resolve conflicts (Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012).

Sense of belonging.

Past research has found that most students benefit from being involved on campus and this is closely connected to having a sense of belonging (Creighton, 2007; Tinto, 2012; Hunn, 2014). Among the students in this study, the importance of feeling like they belonged on campus

seemed true for all of them regardless of having positive or negative experiences on campus. For Bayani, the male Asian American graduate student, feeling like he belonged in College Town and at Midwest University was clear in his description of himself as a townie and growing up around the university. His sense of belonging at MU was further strengthened by a university experience that met his expectations and gave him great experiences, many friends, and two degrees. For him, growing up in town and being familiar with the university, he never had to seek out student organizations or similar resources on campus in order to find a place he felt like he belonged. Instead, a strong sense of belonging at MU was there before he became an enrolled student and likely impacted his commitment to viewing both College Town and Midwest University as great places where most people have similar experiences as he did. This is similar to past findings of both minority and White students' feeling a stronger commitment to the university they attend when feeling like they belong there (Hausman et al., 2007).

For Bayani, as well as Datu, the other Asian American student in this study, their sense of belonging was strong from the beginning of their journey at MU. Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Theory can help us further understand why their sense of belonging on campus seemed stronger than the other students in this study. In recent years, the Student Integration Theory has received critiques for being culturally biased in the notion that students with different backgrounds and experiences, such as minority students who attends PWIs, will need to assimilate into the mainstream culture (e.g., Guiffrida, 2006; Museus, 2008, 2011; Museus et al., 2016). This could perhaps help explain why the two Asian American students in this study who arguably were the most assimilated into the White, mainstream culture on campus, had the most positive experiences at Midwest University and a stronger sense of belonging. They had no negative experiences of the campus culture and did not perceive race or racism to be an issue at the university. They were also the two students who were most similar to the dominant college

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culture, which could explain why the six other students in this study were more aware of the issues that exist at Midwest University.

However, it appears that goal commitment and sense of belonging were more important for the students' likelihood of staying at MU as compared to the students' level of assimilation into the mainstream campus culture. Past research indicates that some students have a harder time feeling like they belong because they are victims of being prejudged and stigmatized based on stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Guiffrida, 2003; Hannon et al., 2016; Harper, 2015; Soloranzo et al., 2000). This was true for Lewa, the Black female junior, who went through a traumatizing freshman year at Midwest University with very little support from the administration and faculty at Midwest University after she was met with racism from the other students in her dorm. She spoke clearly about how minority students' experiences differ from White students' experiences, "…you're gonna feel left out. You're not gonna feel like you are needed, you're wanted, in that classroom." For Lewa, a sense of belonging on campus took time to build and although she has found some sense of belonging at MU, this only extends to certain places on campus and with certain people, such as the Multicultural center and her group of friends. However, finding some sense of belonging seems to have made it possible for her to stay at MU to finish her degree and not transferring to a different university after her first year. Lewa's ability to stay at MU because she found a sense of belonging is similar to what past research has found, such as Baber (2012) and Hurtado et al. (2012), two studies that found that a sense of belonging has a positive influence on academic adjustment and retention rates of minority students.

Lewa's ability to seek out friends, find a sense of belonging, and stay at MU to finish her degree despite her first experiences at Midwest University could be explained by looking at Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Theory. As discussed in chapter 2, Student Integration Theory

assumes that students who enter college have "…background characteristics and individual attributes" (Tinto, 1975, p. 96) that influence their expectations and commitments to the university experience. The interplay between a student's goal commitment and institutional commitment will predict her level of satisfaction with the university and likelihood of leaving. Despite experiencing racism her first semester at MU, which has greatly impacted the following years spent at the university, Lewa never considered leaving and she expressed being highly committed to completing her education at MU before leaving. Although the theory argues that the better a student's background and experiences before college aligns with the expectations of the college, the easier it is for the student to integrate to the college culture (academically and socially) and therefore be more satisfied with the school, Lewa still stayed, despite having a more difficult time integrating socially into the college culture because of the campus environment. However, it could be argued that her goal commitment before she arrived her freshman year (graduating from MU with her undergraduate degree and continuing to graduate school at a different university) and her ability to find a sense of belonging despite her first experiences, she was strong enough to withstand the racism she experienced and the challenges she faced socially at MU. Lewa also said that even though the experience at MU was not what she wanted or expected, the academic aspect of the school is great and "…as a whole, this school is really good." Thus, for Lewa, her goal commitment was strong enough to withstand the lack of institutional commitment from MU and helped her see beyond the racism and find a place on campus where she feels like she belongs.

There were other students in this study, similar to Lewa, who had to work harder to find a sense of belonging on campus. Elena, the Latina student, found it difficult to adjust to a university which lacked diversity. Despite being a MU legacy and familiar with the university before she moved to College Town to attend college, Elena found it difficult meet people outside

of Greek life and the party atmosphere. Although she found it disappointing to not find many other Latina/o student, she has built a community of friends who has helped her adjust to MU. Kimimani, the undergraduate female Native American student first mentioned in chapter four, also found it difficult to adjust to a university setting with little diversity. However, the Native American Center became very important to her during her first semester and she has been able to meet friends and become part of a community through the center. For Ayasha, the other undergraduate female Native American student in this study, joining a sorority gave her access to a community where she found friends, involvement opportunities and new experiences, while also finding a place she belonged on campus. Similar to these students' experiences, past research has found Multicultural Centers, student groups and clubs to be important for minority students attending PWIs as they offer opportunities to meet friends and get involved on campus, thus promoting a sense of belonging (e.g., Castellanos, 2016; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell Jr., 2014; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Museus, 2008; Robertson et al., 2016; Shotton et al, 2007).

For all of these students, despite having a harder time finding a sense of belonging on campus, Student Integration Theory can help us understand why they withstood the negative experiences and worked harder to find friends and areas on campus where they can be themselves. Similar to the assumptions of this theory, the eight students in this study entered Midwest University with a variety of different backgrounds and experiences that most likely influenced their success in college. An important part of their likelihood to stay at MU until graduation was their sense of belonging. Although the students had a variety of backgrounds and experiences on campus, what they have in common is their high achievements and goals, either aiming at graduate-, law-, or med-school. Thus, their commitment to college is arguably above the average student and this most likely influenced their decision to attend and stay at MU, as

well as why they were able to look beyond negative experiences and find people and resources on campus that have helped them gain a sense of belonging.

Racism on Campus.

In this study, Critical Race Theory has provided a framework for understanding how the experiences of the students in this study are shaped by the dominant population and discourses on campus. The use of narratives gave voice to eight minority students at a Predominantly White Institution, a perspective that is often overlooked in discussions of the campus climate at PWIs. The stories they told have highlighted a lack of inclusion in classrooms as mentioned in several stories. It has also revealed the existence of racism, stereotypes, and bias against minority students on campus, as well as the lack of action by the university administration when faced with such racism. This is similar to how past research have argued the benefit of using Critical Race Theory as a lens into the experiences of minority students

"….one innovative feature of critical race theory is the use of narratives or counter stories to give voice to minority persons. By introducing their lived experiences into discourses about social processes and institutional practices, minority persons challenge the dominant social reality; that is, the 'stock story' the dominant group uses to justify its alter ego" (Aguirre, 2010, p. 763).

From the stories shared by the students in this study, it has become clear that different forms of racism exist at the Predominantly White Institution, but the student experience of it varied. Two of the students, Lewa and Chimalis, described experiencing blatant racism on campus. Two of the students, Elena and Ayasha, described experiencing less obvious instances of stereotyping and bias because of their minority background. Two of the students, Imani and Kimimela, did not

have experiences with racism, but they described hearing stories of other students' experiences and how this impacted their view of Midwest University. The two Asian American students in this study, Bayani and Datu, however, did not have any experiences with direct or subtle racism and Datu had not heard of any racism on campus, while Bayani had heard of one incident but was uncertain of whether it was because of the person's race or if it had been blown up in social media.

Some of the students, in particular the two Black students in this study, Lewa and Imani, discussed rug sweeping of racism on campus by the administration and lack of reporting racist incidents by the victims. While Lewa shared the lack of response and consequences from the university after the racist incident that happened at her dorm, Imani shared not having knowledge about racism at MU until her last semester. For Imani, hearing about various times when different students had been victims of racism at MU changed her view of the university. Although she was aware of the statistics on minority students' experiences at universities in general, she did not know the extent of racism at MU, "…we don't talk about it, cause they might not even report the incidents, because they probably don't feel comfortable, they probably feel as though, like nothing will be done about it." For both Lewa and Imani, their explanations of rug sweeping of such issues might also explain why some minority students, such as Datu and Bayani, are less aware of racism at their own university if they have not have direct experiences with it. Past research has found that both faculty and administrators at universities fail to view racism as a systematic issue related to the campus culture and instead views each incident as isolated events (Altbach et al., 2002). This further contributes to a lack of understanding of race relations on campus in general and many White students "…do not grasp the seriousness of the situation, nor do they recognize the feelings and reactions of underrepresented students" (Altbach et al., 2002, p. 31).

As suggested previously, Bayani and Datu's stories were vastly different from the other students' in this study. Their view of the campus climate as primarily positive might reflect their ability to assimilate into the dominant campus culture and their view of racism on campus might therefore align more closely with White students at PWIs. They had very little awareness of any racism on campus and Bayani explicitly shared that he views Midwest University as a good place and that there is not a race problem on campus. However, he had heard about Lewa's story when it occurred, but similar to the findings of Altbach et al. (2002) he might not fully grasp the seriousness of Lewa's experiences. When he talked about the incident he said "…it supposedly had this racial connotation to it and when people see that without context, they automatically assume racism or something along those lines. And it's unfortunate that that happens because we don't know what exactly was going on." The two Asian American students' experiences at MU are very different from the six other students in this study. Their awareness of racism at MU differs vastly, especially when considering that the other students who told stories about experiencing some form of racism or stereotyping on campus, said that they knew of or had heard about other minority students who had it worse at MU.

At Midwest University, racism and the preference of Whiteness is exemplified through many of the stories told by the students in this study. It seems that this is related to the structure of the campus becaus several of the student spoke about racism as not being dealt with, but instead viewed on an individual basis and therefore continues to be seen as separate from the campus culture itself. When racism is not viewed as systematic a systematic issue connected to the campus culture, the administration does not have to deal with it and it becomes easier to rug sweep it as suggested by several of the students. This is not unique to Midwest University, but has also been found at other Predominantly White Universities (e.g., Altbach et al., 2002).

Visible vs. Invisible Minority Students.

The use of Critical Race Theory helped provide a framework to lift the voices of some of the minority students at Midwest University. In addition to revealing patterns of racism on campus, the stories told by the students indicates a campus culture in which White students, or students who identify with the mainstream culture on campus, have better experiences as compared to their minority peers. This is similar to past arguments made by CRT in which racial privilege is viewed as a structured practice that produces and preserves racial inequality through the preference of Whiteness (Gusa, 2010; Pierce, 2003). Furthermore, it seems as though the color of your skin, or perhaps the shade of your skin, highly impacts the way you experience the campus culture at MU. Most of the past research looking at "invisible minorities" have used this term to describe the experiences of LGBTQ students in higher education (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Lapinski & Sexton, 2014; Lopez & Chism, 1993). However, in this study the experiences of the minority students can be explained by looking at their skin color and the extent of whether they "look" like a minority student or not. Although the literature is limited when looking at studies that have examined differences between visible and invisible racial minority students, this is something that the students in this study brought up on several occasions. Despite having a range of variations in their demographic aspects, it seems as though skin color might be the aspect that has impacted the experiences of all eight students the most, even though they varied in how aware of this they were.

All students, regardless of their racial identity, shared stories' that involved the color of their skin in some way. Several of them, such as Imani and Chimalis, mentioned how being more fair skinned makes it easier for them compared to minority students with darker skin. Imani, the Black graduate student, spoke of being treated differently "…because I am more fair skinned I have noticed that people will obviously feel more comfortable around me or will treat me

different than they would to another person of color that is a darker shade than me" and that straightening her curly hair often made her feel more welcome when she interacted with others. Chimalis, the Native American graduate student, spoke of being a Native American and being treated as White. She had several experiences where people spoke in biased and derogatory ways about Native Americans, not knowing that Chimalis is Native American. For Imani and Chimalis, being treated differently because of a lighter skin tone was something they were both very aware of and they spoke of knowing darker-skinned students who had negative experiences both at the Predominantly White Institution and elsewhere in society.

Although there is limited research exploring the experiences of invisible (fair skinned) and visible (darker skinned) minority students, we can look elsewhere for comparisons of their general experiences in society. Studies on colorism have found that media rarely mention the concept of colorism, or "discrimination based on skin lightness" (Hannon, p. 13, 2014). However, colorism has been defined as "the process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of color over their dark-skinned counterparts" (Hunter, 2007 p. 237; Hunter, 2005). Most of the research on colorism has looked at other areas than education, but colorism impacts education because it is "…a process of social stratification that capitalizes skin color by privileging lighter-skinned toned individuals over darker-skinned individuals of a particular racial or ethnic group in education, socioeconomic status, and marriage among other facets associated with life trajectory" (Harris, 2018, p. 2073). For example, research has found that employers prefer lighter skinned black males over darker skinned black males, even when those with darker skin had both more education and work experience (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). On average, Latinos with lighter skin earn more than their peers with darker skin (Vedentam, 2010), this has also been found for lighter skinned African Americans (Acre, Murguia, & Parker Frisibe, 1987; Allen, Telles, & Hunter, 2000;). Research looking at colorism within the justice system has found that Black

females with lighter skin are more likely to receive shorter prison sentences and serve less time compared to those with darker skin (Viglione, Hannon, & Defina, 2011) and darker skinned Black and Latino individuals are more likely to be stopped and arrested by the police compared to their lighter skinned peers (White, 2015). When looking at education, the limited research found indicates a similar pattern where Latinos with lighter skin completes more schooling compared to their darker skinned peers (Murguia & Telles, 1996) and both Latina/o and Black students' educational patterns are impacted by colorism discrimination (Hunter, 2015).

Although the two Asian American students in this study never mentioned that the color of their skin might impact their experiences, these two students were among the participants in this study with lighter skin, which might have had a positive impact on their experiences as minority students at a Predominantly White Institution. This, coupled with a larger degree of assimilation into White mainstream culture as mentioned earlier, could explain why they were less aware of racism on campus. In addition, these two students were both high-achieving students who were doing very well in their respective majors. Past literature, in particular, studies by Dr. Samuel Museus and his colleagues, have used the term of invisible minorities when describing how much of the existing research on Asian Americans in higher education tend to generalize and reflect the experiences of those who do exceptionally well (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Museus & Park, 2015; Museus et al., 2016). Thus, being lighter skinned, doing very well in college, and being more assimilated into the White culture on campus, might contribute to having a more invisible minority status when interacting with students and faculty at the PWI as well as in the overall community of College Town.

When looking at the experiences of the darker skinned students in this study, all four mentioned the color of their skin being a visible part of their identity. While Lewa mentioned that the racist incident she was a victim off directly mentioned her skin color, she also emphasized

how proud she was of her skin color and heritage. For Elena, being the only non-White student in social situations often led to differential treatment between her Caucasian friends and her in College Town, "…lately I've been noticing one of my best friends, she's American, so whenever we are together and we are in social situations, people talk to her and not to me." She mentioned that this is also something that happens to her on campus and in the classroom as well. However, Elena also said that because she is lighter skinned, she feels like she gets a milder form of this treatment compared to darker skinned students. Kimimela spoke of being insecure as a new student and feeling like she was standing out as "…the only brown person sitting at this table." Ayasha spoke of skin color in different ways, similar to Kimimela, she mentioned standing out on campus because she is one of few non-White students at a PWI. But she also spoke of being seen as White when she travels back to her reservation, "…they'll joke and be like oh, because you're White now or something like that. Or they'll say that you sound White because of how you talk. And it's like I don't sound White, I sound smart." For Ayasha, the PWI made her skin color stand out, but at the reservation it was the influence of the PWI that made her stand out. Ayasha mentioned being called an apple by people on her reservation (red on the outside, White on the inside) which has been mentioned by past research as well, as a way of describing Native American acculturation (Garret & Pichette, 2011).

Reflections

This narrative study re-told the stories of eight racial minority students. Their stories reflect their uniqueness as individual students and their experiences reflected the many different aspects of being a minority student at a Predominantly White Institution. Although only parts of

their experiences have been discussed in this chapter due to length, there are certain implications, limitations, and ideas for future research that this study highlights.

Implications.

This study has several important implications for Predominantly White Institutions and the experiences of their racial minority students. First, as made clear through the stories told by the students in this study, this is a group of students who are often met with racism, stereotypes, and bias. If the goal of a PWI is student retention and graduation it is imperative to ensure that all students have positive experiences and wants to attend the institution. Thus, PWIs need to implement policies and strategies to make sure that these students are met with positive attitudes from administration, faculty, staff, and students. Education, such as diversity training for faculty and students, are one way to promote knowledge about diversity and building skills among all students to break the silencing of racism on campus.

Second, all eight students told stories that involved resources for minority students on campus such as multicultural centers, culture nights, student organizations, and diversity officers. The importance of such resources for the well-being and sense of belonging for minority students can't be overstated and Predominantly White Institutions that want to promote positive experiences for their minority students need to promote and give economic support to establish and maintain such resources for their students.

Third, the challenges faced by racial minority students are different when compared to their White peers. The students in this study told stories about experiencing racism in the community, having professors and peers who fail to understand and promote other perspectives than the White, mainstream perspective, having a more difficult time finding friends on campus,

and challenges when being a first-generation student. The predominantly White Institution in this study seems to lack the tools needed to help this group of students. This could be because the PWI itself lacks knowledge about how to help, lacks knowledge about what this group of students struggle with, or lacks an administration that wants to ensure that all of their students, regardless of background, have positive experiences of the campus climate. Regardless of reason, this study indicates that institutions of higher education, PWIs in particular, need to do more to ensure that all of their students have positive experiences on campus. This will involve time and resources, as well as the determination to change the entire campus culture to ensure that all students are met with positive attitudes, guidance, help, and resources according to their need. This needs to be done to ensure that the four years or more spent at the PWI are filled with positive memories and a sense of being wanted and belonging on campus. All of these students are future alumni and potential donors of time and money. And perhaps more importantly, they pay for their education in the same manner as their White peers and they deserve a college experience without racism, stereotypes, bias, lack of resources, and rug sweeping from an administration that should fight to ensure they have positive experiences like their White peers.

Limitations.

There are some limitations of this research that should be taken in to consideration. First, although there are patterns across the stories that highlight shared experiences within this context, this is a qualitative study and no generalizations of the findings can be made. Additionally, the sample of participants in this study consisted of eight students who all were high achieving students aiming for either graduate, law-, or med-school. Their experiences at the Predominantly White Institution may therefore differ from other students at the university. Furthermore, the

students in this study volunteered to participate, this segment of the minority population at Midwest University might be different from the students who did not volunteer to participate. With respect to the sample in this study, there was only one student who identified as Latina and her experiences might differ vastly from other Latina/o students at the Predominantly White Institution. As for the Asian American participants, past research indicates that the experiences of this student group tend to be viewed as a "…monolithic group that achieves universal academic and occupational success" (Museus & Maramba, 2011, p. 232). The two Asian American students in this study identified as Filipino and were both highly successful in their respective majors. It is of special importance to keep in mind that there might be Asian American students at the PWI who do not perform at the same rate and their experiences might therefore be vastly different. Past research has found that Asian American students tend to viewed and treated as the "model minority" (Chang & Kian, 2002; Lee & Zhou, 2015) and there might be Asian American students at the PWI who are meeting barriers and challenges to academic success and positive experiences not discussed in this study.

Future Research.

The stories shared by the students in this study have led to several suggestions of areas for future research. First and foremost, there is an important lack of research on colorism or visible versus invisible minority students at Predominantly White Institutions. Though this study found skin color to be an important aspect of the students experiences at the PWI studied, a study that focuses more explicitly on colorism among racial minority students attending PWIs would allow a broader understanding of its impact on the experiences of minority students. This would be

especially important for Native American students as this area of the literature is especially

scarce.

Second, future research should also study how administrators and faculty at

Predominantly White Institutions view racism on campus. As past research has found that faculty

and administrators often view racism as isolated events not related to the overall campus culture

and the students in this study shared stories of rug sweeping racist incidents and lack of

consequences, it seems imperative to shed more light on how racism is viewed and dealt with at

PWIs.

Third, future research should also consider looking at the impact of diversity training for

faculty and students at Predominantly White Institutions. Through many of the stories told in this

study, the students emphasized their desire for other students and faculty to learn more about

diversity. Diversity training was suggested by several of them as key to battling racism,

stereotypes, and bias. Some of the past studies that have looked at the impact of diversity training

suggests that it can positively impact the experiences of minority students (e.g., Bezrukova et al.,

2012). It would be especially interesting to explore whether diversity training can increase both

knowledge and skills among White faculty and students and whether such training can contribute

to acquiring skills such as speaking up when hearing racist or biased comments at PWIs.

Lastly, although there is a great need of more research on the experiences of all of the

minority groups explored in this study, there is an important lack of research on Native American

students attending Predominantly White Institution. The difficulties faced by Native American

students attending PWIs continues to impact their experiences and retention rates, and more

research is needed to more fully understand their experiences and the resources needed at PWIs

in order to better meet the needs of this student group. Some of the areas suggested by the stories

of the three Native American students in this study are the impact of physical spaces for Native

American students on campus (Kimimela), White students' attitudes against their Native American peers (Chimalis), and Native American students' ability to balance the demands of both the PWI and their home at the reservation (Ayasha).

Summary

The findings from this study suggests that the experiences of minority students who attend Preliminary White Institutions are complicated and diverse. They have challenges that differ from their White peers, but perhaps many of these challenges stem from needs that are more similar than different; the need for a sense of belonging on campus, access to resources, being treated fairly, being understood and represented in classroom discussions with professors and their peers, and wanting college to be the time of their life. The stories told by the eight students in this study have highlighted areas in need of improvement and stories about a time in college that include both positive and negative experiences. Although there are certain aspects of their experiences, as well as challenges that are unique for racial minority students, their dreams and desires when they begin their journey to college seems pretty similar to any other student about to start college. If Predominantly White Institutions like Midwest University put racial minority students' experiences on their agenda and implements some of the suggested challenges made by the students in this study, perhaps the stories told of universities like MU are more similar, regardless of being told by a Black, Asian American, Native American, Latina, or White student. At least that should be the goal PWIs fight for, to ensure that the negative experiences told by the students in this study becomes fewer and that positive experiences becomes the new normal for minority students at any university in the United States.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

<u>Background Questions</u>

Q1. Tell me a little about your background

Probes:

- Where in the U.S. are you from?

    o Are you from a big or small city?

    o How different is Grand Forks from your hometown?

- How long have you been a student at UND?

- What is your major? Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

    o If graduate, where did you do your undergraduate and/or masters degree?

        ▪ Big or small college? Diverse? Big or small city?

- What do you plan to do when you finish your degree?

    o Do you plan on staying in Grand Forks? Why, why not?

Q2. Why did you choose to attend UND?

Probes:

- What did you know about UND before you became a student at UND?

- What expectations did you have about UND?

    o How has these expectations been met?

- What did you know about Grand Forks before you became a student at UND?

- What expectations did you have about Grand Forks?

    o How has these expectations been met?

General climate perception

Q3. In general, how would you describe the campus climate at UND for minority students?

Probes:

- How would you describe the campus climate to a non-UND student?

- Can you describe a specific time or an experience when the university was welcoming?

- Can you describe a specific time or an experience when the university was not welcoming?

Q4. Thinking about the UND campus, how would you describe students' ability to be themselves?

Probes:

- For example, are there some students who would have a more difficult time with displaying their religion, heritage, culture, etc. than others?

  o Who are they?

  o Why do you think this is?

Q5. Thinking about minority students in general at UND, how would you describe the minority student experience on campus?

Probes:

- Do you feel that university ensures a good campus climate for all students?

  o If so, how? If not, why?

- Do you feel the students contributes to a good campus climate?

  o Do you have any examples of this?

- Overall and specific examples?

- Do you feel the faculty and staff contributes to a good campus climate?

    o Do you have any examples of this?

        - Overall and specific examples?

Q6. In general, how would you describe the climate in Grand Forks for minority students?

Probes:

- How would you describe the climate in Grand Forks for minorities to a someone who had never been here before?

- Can you describe a specific time or an experience when Grand Forks was welcoming?

- Can you describe a specific time or an experience when Grand Forks was not welcoming?

- Can you describe a time when Grand Forks was welcoming as welcoming and inclusive of all students?

Q7. Thinking about Grand Forks in general, how would you describe minorities' ability to be themselves?

Probes:

- For example, are there some minority groups who would have a more difficult time with displaying their religion, heritage, culture, etc. than others?

    o Who are they?

    o Why do you think this is?

Participants' own experiences

Q8. How would you characterize [insert interviewee's minority group] students' overall experience on campus?

Probes:

- Compared to other racial minority groups on campus, are there some minority groups that has a worse experience than others?

    o Can you tell me a little more about this?

Q9. If someone were to ask you to describe a time when you felt uncomfortable at UND, what would you tell them?

Probes:

- Could you tell me more about this experience(s)?

- Do you think this is an experience that many minority students at UND are having or have had?

- Can you tell me if there are specific areas of campus where you are less comfortable?

    o Can you tell me a little more about this?

Q10. Thinking about your experiences in Grand Forks versus the UND campus, do you find the climate similar or different?

Probes:

- Are there examples or experiences that you can use to explain that?

Q11. Based on your own experience, what are the challenges faced by minority students who attend UND?

Probes:

- Are there certain areas that need more improvement than others?

    o Faculty?

    o Students?

    o Administration?

Are there any other experiences of the campus climate at UND or overall Grand Forks that you would like to share?