

What's mine isn't yours, but what's yours is definitely mine:
University student use of Cherokee Indian culture in identity formation

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ACADEMIC AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to answer the following research question: In what ways, if any, do students at a given PWI with a commonly known connection to specific American Indian nation(s) engage with settler-colonial narratives to selectively remember events and express their collective identity? Specifically, I investigate these phenomena as they relate to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) at Western Carolina University (WCU) using as my data source articles in the student newspaper, *The Western Carolinian*.

The data for the study is drawn from the student-run campus newspaper, *The Western Carolinian*, from its origin in 1924 up to 1974. This study will view the historic relationship between WCU and the EBCI as presented in the *Western Carolinian* by examining references to the Cherokee people, with an emphasis on how these student-authors interpret EBCI culture and history through settler-colonial narratives to create and maintain their own identity. This study determined that students at WCU selectively remember events and express their collective identity as both related to, distinct from, and dominant to the Cherokee people and subsequently, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Each time that these student-authors engage with a settler-colonial narrative, they create another tie that holds together their collective student identity, laying a foundation on which other collective identity boundaries can be created and maintained.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns a predominantly white university, Western Carolina University, with historical links to the Cherokee people as well as contemporary links to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. I chose to analyze WCU's student newspaper within a 50-year period before and during the beginning emergence of the American Indian Movement to determine in what ways, if any, do students engage with settler-colonial narratives to selectively remember events and express their student body collective identity. Within the analysis process, I determined the narratives of Ancient Peoples, Exoticism and Romanticism, and Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples most significantly impacted student identity formation. My results demonstrated how students' newspaper articles intertwined campus identity narratives with a perpetuation of settler-colonial beliefs.

Preface

The following outlines background information it would be beneficial to address before introducing the thesis itself.

Personal connection

I attended Western Carolina University from 2018 to 2020, graduating in 2020 with two BA degrees in English Literature and Sociology, respectively. Though I was there for a short time, WCU was and remains a deeply special part of my life, I will always consider the campus a sort of home or peaceful place. Other connections I have to the campus include: my stepdad attended and graduated from WCU with a degree in environmental science; I met my partner of three years while attending; I also met many of my closest friends at WCU, whom I would consider lifelong friends; I became deeply involved with campus activism and began a capstone project that inspired my current thesis—both of which I credit as aiding my acceptance into Virginia Tech’s Sociology program.

I am not a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, nor do I have any connections to other American Indian nations. I am not from the Cullowhee area, nor did I grow up on traditional Cherokee land, as my hometown occupies the traditional territory of the Catawba Indian Nation. I would not have pursued this research without the connections I made at WCU, and my alumni status is intimately tied to this research. During my time at WCU while I completed my capstone project, I connected with a representative of the EBCI, who has provided aid at different times during the research process, including during this thesis project. I have endeavored to discuss the how the students of WCU discuss the their imagined or real connections to the Cherokee, while respecting the traditional knowledge and history of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that is not mine to share, discuss, nor research.

Research into IRB protocols and communication

During the course of my capstone and independent study at WCU, I was introduced to several faculty members who aided me in finding resources as well as facilitating a meeting between myself and the director of the WCU Cherokee Center, Sky Sampson. Sky was invaluable to me in my attempt to conduct research on student interpretations of the Cherokee while still maintaining the privacy and autonomy of the EBCI. In other words, my goal was and remains to study *settler colonials* and their understandings of the Cherokee people—not to study the Cherokee people, nor to provide any knowledge beyond what the Cherokee people themselves have published for public consumption (i.e. on the EBCI or Cherokee Nation websites). During that project I communicated regularly with Sky, until the pandemic interrupted my time on campus and my research—as well as her ability to help me in her spare time. Upon the completion of my degree, I told Sky that I was interested in continuing to work with the data I had collected from the student newspaper, and I was given her blessing to do so.

A multitude of factors has limited our contact for justifiable reasons—however, in her absence I attempted to contact other authority figures and contacts my previous professors had in the EBCI government. Unfortunately, I was unable to maintain these introductions and ultimately had to rely on three sources for confirmation and information about my research: previous faculty at WCU, the guidance of my committee member, Dr. Cook, and lastly, the IRB protocols of the EBCI, as seen in Figure 1, Statement From Cultural Internal Review Board Of The Eastern Band Of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). In summary, studies must seek approval from either the EBCI Cultural IRB and/or Health & Medical IRB if they will include tribal members from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) or will occur on Cherokee lands (e.g., the Qualla Boundary or Snowbird community). My study contains neither of these features, so it was not necessary to obtain IRB approval from the EBCI—however, I did my best to follow their guidelines as outlined in Figure 1. In the coming months, I will request time to sit down with Sky Sampson, as well as any other entities she suggests to discuss my research, answer any questions, as well as take into account their critiques.

Terminology

American Indian, Indian, Native American, Indigenous, or Native can all be used to refer to American Indians, although the general consensus among nations is that one’s specific tribal name is the most respectful (Cornell 1990; National Museum of the American Indian; Strong 2013). Following the lead of Vizen and Strong I rely upon the terms Indigenous to refer to “real cultures or communities” (Vizen vii); although this concept is problematic, as it enforces narratives and notions of authenticity—who is considered a “real Native” (Strong 2013). I use the term Indigenous when I am referring to multiple nations as a collective, such as when discussing the impacts of settler-colonialism—which is not limited to the US. When directly discussing US settler-colonialism or multiple nations located in the US, I use the term American Indian. The student authors I analyze rarely use the full name (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) or acronym (EBCI) of the tribe in their discussions, instead they rely upon the generalized terms Cherokee or Indian. This is often done in the past tense, such as referring to “ancient times” when the Cherokee owned the land that WCU now occupies—a time before the organized forced removal Trail of Tears and thus, the creation of the EBCI. To maintain continuity, I tend to use Cherokee when performing my analysis, to mimic the generalizations that the students are engaging with. I purposively use the tribe’s title when referring to the EBCI in the present tense or in an official capacity. Though I am attempting to be deliberate in my use of phrasing, there will undoubtedly be many exceptions in this text, particularly in outside sources and quotations (Strong 2013). Additionally, I recognize that not all American Indians or scholars of Indigenous studies will agree with this statement currently, and that readers of this thesis five or ten or twenty years from now may consider terminology used in this thesis problematic by new understandings that will have evolved by that time. Though there is little I can do to address future critiques of my terminology, I commit myself to continuing to listen to

the voices of Indigenous peoples globally foremost, as well as learning from the academy on terminology.

Lastly, one of the articles in my final dataset contains a derogatory slur towards American Indians. There are two locations where this slur is not censored: 1) in the Analysis section I discuss the article in a subsection, where the full title is used to introduce the article, 2) in Appendix B, the title is again named in full as a part of a reference page listing all 25 articles in this study. All other instances of the term have been censored to the best of my ability.

Acknowledgements

I am incredibly thankful for the kindness of my committee chair, Dr. Dale Wimberley, given the state of the pandemic when I began my graduate student journey, as well as the significant health concerns I experienced and am still experiencing in the time since. The continued reminders that, yes, my current struggles are valid hinderances to my academic journey that should be acknowledged; however, there are always potential paths forward that I can find in my own time. My remaining committee members, Dr. Ashley Reichelmann and Dr. Sam Cook, continually echoed these reassuring reminders in a chorus I'm grateful to have. Without my committee's knowledge, protection, and willingness to listen, move deadlines, and support me in any way they could—completing this thesis would not have been possible.

Joining the chorus of support, as always, were my amazing cohort members. Miraculously, we managed to socially-distant bond during a pandemic, and that bond was desperately needed. Outside of my closest friends before graduate school, I couldn't have imagined better people to laugh and commiserate with.

This thesis stemmed from a year-long honors project and independent study performed under the guidance of Dr. Mwaniki, a sociology professor in my department at WCU. The skills I learned and the research I performed in that project are the result of his belief in me and shared curiosity in my ideas. I credit that research, as well as the recommendation letters from Dr. Brennan and Dr. Nieckarz, as the reason I obtained entry into VT.

Additionally, I am grateful for Sky Sampson, the director of the WCU Cherokee Center, who provided guidance, answered unending questions, and demonstrated a level of responsibility, integrity, and respect that I have striven to emulate. Interactions with Dr. Mae Hey upon arriving to VT built upon this foundation from Sky. Dr. Hey challenged many of my own settler-colonial assumptions, forcing me to become a more engaged and respectful researcher—as well as a better person.

My singular focus on the “lilies” project forced my closest friends from WCU to endure many strange conversations, monologues, and visuals that wrapped around my dorm room. Being able to bounce my ideas off of them combined with their willingness to force me to take breaks kept me from total burnout. Thank you to my beautiful partner—who uprooted his life for me—and absolutely everything he's done to support me in this process. Lastly, I am eternally grateful to my parents, to my mom who raised me to love learning, and to my stepdad, without whom I never would have considered WCU for my undergraduate degree.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis seeks to answer the following research question: In what ways, if any, do students at a given PWI with a commonly known connection to specific American Indian nation(s) engage with settler-colonial narratives to selectively remember events and express their student body collective identity? Specifically, I investigate these phenomena as they relate to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) at Western Carolina University (WCU) using as my data source articles in the student newspaper, *The Western Carolinian*.

The data for the study is drawn from the student-run campus newspaper, *The Western Carolinian*, from its origin in 1924 up to 1974. This study will examine how student-authors interpret EBCI culture and history through settler-colonial narratives to create and maintain their own collective identity, specifically through references to the Cherokee people in their published articles.

The histories of WCU as an institution, the Cullowhee-Sylva region as a settlement, the associated local communities of both, and the EBCI are intertwined, resulting in a deep local fascination among non-Cherokees with Cherokee culture, people, and their connection to the land that the community and university occupies (a more detailed timeline can be found in Table 1 of *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*). Unless otherwise noted, the following factual information is sourced from Dr. William Ernest Bird's 1963 book, *The History of Western Carolina College: The Progress of an Idea*. (From his hiring in 1920 until 1956, Dr. Bird was both a professor and an administrator; he served as president of the college for one year before retiring in 1957, after which he remained connected with the school as president emeritus and college historian until his death in 1975 (Wiest 1979).)

Although American Indian nations signed treaties often explicitly denying settlers entry to their remaining lands, settlers often illegally squatting while the federal or state governments ignored their actions (Dunbar-Ortiz 2021; Wolfe 2006). In 1819, Cherokee-owned lands in the Cullowhee-Sylva region became legally recognized by the US federal government as part of North Carolina, making it purchasable to white squatters with wealth (Bird 1963; Conley 2005; Treaty of Washington 1819). The settlement formed was known first as "Painter" but later changed to "Cullowhee," an anglicized version of the original Cherokee name— Joolth-cullah-wee, or Judaculla's Place (Powell and Hill 2010). In 1820, former members of the Cherokee Nation who had given up their tribal status connected various private lands to form Quallatown (Conley 2005; Cherokee Nation. n.d.). The Treaty of Echota (1838-39) marked the formal beginning to the US government–forced removal of the Cherokee Nation to the territory of Oklahoma, but those residing in Quallatown were legally deemed private citizens by the US government and were not forced to comply (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. n.d.; Cherokee Nation. n.d.). Quallatown hid surviving refugees and those who walked back from Oklahoma once the US soldiers departed (US Department of the Interior. n.d.; Cherokee Nation. n.d.). In 1889, North Carolina acknowledged Quallatown's charter and governing document, giving state recognition to the tribe (Conley 2005; Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. n.d.)

Also in that year, Cullowhee Academy (aka Cullowhee High School) was founded on lands sold and donated by two of the original squatters who bought land in 1819 (Bird 1963); the academy went through many names and changes but ultimately becomes Western Carolina University (Bird 1963; Wood and Blethen 1989); see Figure 2. In 1924, the student-run campus newspaper *The Cullowhee Yodel* was established and renamed *The Western Carolinian* in 1933 (Southern Appalachian Digital Collections. N.d.). Throughout its long publication history, the paper features articles on subjects such as contemporaneous events both on campus and in the greater Western North Carolina area involving the Cherokee; this includes trips to the “tourist” areas of Cherokee, visits to the Reservation school to inspect Cherokee children’s efforts in assimilation, and archeological digs on campus to find Cherokee artifacts. Also included are articles on pre-settler Cherokee history of the region, imagined or misinterpreted Cherokee history and mythology, and assumed cultural practices. It is articles like these, and others, that make up the data for the analysis outlined above.

To underscore the social context of the relationship between WCU and the EBCI, two dates must be acknowledged: 1819 and 1889. The 1819 Treaty of Washington created the community of Cullowhee as a legal establishment of North Carolina; before this, the white settlers who lived here were illegally living on Cherokee land. The sale of this land to private owners directly resulted in the expansion of the university in later years. Without this treaty, the existence of the university would not have occurred. The formal state recognition of the EBCI as a nation and Cullowhee Academy as a schooling institution both occurred in 1889 (Bird 1963; Conley 2005; Treaty of Washington 1819). Both of the above prove that the Cherokee people’s existence was well known to the white people of Cullowhee and provides historical evidence for their deep fascination with—and consequent co-optation of—EBCI culture, people, and land by local non-Cherokee people.

Beginning in 2011, WCU has focused on cultivating a more positive relationship between the EBCI and campus administration through public acknowledgement and celebration of the Cherokee peoples (Eastman et al. 2022). Various partnerships between the university and tribal, state, and federal entities have contributed to this positive development, such as the combined effort between the US Forest Service, WCU, and the EBCI to renovate and rename the university’s archeological archive. During the 2019 dedication of the Tali Tsisgwayahi Archaeological Collections Curation Facility, former EBCI principal chief (as well as a WCU trustee and alumna) Joyce Dugan observed:

This creates a great responsibility for the university going forward. This facility highlights Western Carolina University’s commitment to the preservation and enhancement of Cherokee history, of our heritage, and of our traditional culture. As a member of the tribe and a former leader, and on behalf of the tribe, I think I am safe to say that we remain committed to assisting with your effort. I am really pleased and proud today to see this come about and that the Indigenous people could be involved (Eastman et al 2022).

As Dugan suggests, WCU's great responsibility and commitment to the Cherokee people is extremely admirable, as well as a step towards changing the power relations between the tribe and university—especially as this change seems to be well supported by the tribe itself. However, many of these changes are both recently developed as well as connected to physical acts or symbols on behalf of the administration. Campus administration is a vital part of the university structure, it is not the only entity that creates and sustains the university's collective identity—the university student body is equally, if not more important. Though positive public acknowledgement of the Cherokee people is a recent development, the perceived history and culture of the Cherokee has always been part of university's history; thus, it is a part of how WCU students narrate their own collective identity as related to the university—this process can be traced through their published student articles. And within this context lies part of the social significance of my analysis in this thesis: that I examine how and the extent to which students have created and sustained just such a student-originated campus heritage based upon common settler-colonial perceptions of Cherokee history and culture, beginning in the paper's inaugural year, 1924, and ending in 1974.

In analyzing 1924-1974, I am examining a relatively homogeneous period in which the narratives I discovered—while not totally static in American culture and the WCU student mind—were not dramatically challenged at the societal level. Formally organized American Indian agency began growing (or at least transitioning) in late 1960s and early 1970s, partly rooted in the influence of the rights master frame of the Civil Rights Movement, and reflected in the emergence of the American Indian Movement in 1968 and the event of the Wounded Knee Occupation in 1973 (Davey 2022; Wittstock and Salinas 2006). The period after approximately 1974 is a time in which my narratives – their accepted meanings, the contesting thereof, and so forth – would no longer be as applicable to the kind of analysis performed. This interpretation partly reflects what I discovered in the post-1974 newspaper article I examined, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3: Methods. There is some localized evidence to support the assumption that student attitudes had the potential to be dramatically changed by broader societal narratives in that WCU, in joint partnership with the EBCI, formed the Cherokee Center in 1975. According to the homepage of the Cherokee Center,

The WCU Cherokee Center was founded in 1975 when Lawrence Arvey founded the center as a hub for professors that would teach the college level courses across the street from the Old Cherokee High School. As the years went on, those professors were no longer needed because the teacher could become certified to teach the course themselves. The Center has become the headquarters for all outreach and involvement in the Cherokee community. We provide many services to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians students and the surrounding region (Cherokee Center n.d.)

Though the above is a brief summary of undoubtedly complicated relations and negotiations between the university and the EBCI, it demonstrates a localized version of the growing or transitioning agency of American Indian communities in American culture. The bureaucratic nature of the university system means that it is slow to react to societal change and pressure,

especially in creating new organizations or positions that truly have the power to make decisions based on those current mindsets (Terjesen 2022). The creation of the Cherokee Center indicates at least some reaction to changing societal mindsets about American Indians, thus, students assumedly must also be influenced by these mindsets in the years surrounding 1975. The periodization of 1924 to 1974 provides a glimpse into how WCU students can implicitly or explicitly circulate harmful settler-colonial narratives about the Cherokee between themselves—before they could have been influenced by the 1970s cultural shift in mainstream understandings of American Indians, reflected both nationally and locally (to campus).

In addition to circulating narratives between themselves, students also circulate identity narratives to outside communities they come into contact with. Students can be perceived as ambassadors of a university's identity to outside communities who may not otherwise be aware of the activities of campus administration; thus, any action to affect positive change in the relationship between the university and the EBCI is not complete unless students are also involved. The clearest way for students to become involved is to examine what role they play within the relationship, or rather, what role they have historically given the Cherokee people to play as portrayed in their publications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Colonialism, U.S. Settler-Colonialism, and Whiteness

Colonialism as a process refers primarily to the logics and actions of nation-states that seek to control, develop, and extract human and material resources for economic gain, with no regard to the physical, psychological, and cultural damage inflicted upon the colonized population (Sassen 2010; Rocha Beardall 2022). Settler colonialism is a distinct form of colonialism that violently displaces, removes, and exterminates Indigenous Peoples through illegal squatting, land stealing, and forced treaties to make way for encroaching settler colonial communities and societies who aim to create permanent settlements (Glenn 2015; Veracini 2011; Wolfe 2006; Rocha Beardall 2022).

As a settler colonial nation-state, the US relied on the European/Christian Doctrine of Discovery and the concept of “terra nullius” or the idea that the territory in question is “without a master” (Cornell Law School n.d.). Though the land is currently (and possibly ancestrally) occupied by a nation(s) or minority group(s) of people, it can be legally claimed by the invading settler-colonials—as it doesn’t yet belong to any recognized or legitimate nation-state (Cornell Law School n.d.; Veracini 2015). British colonialists, and by extension the US, claimed its “discovery” of America overruled the sovereignty of American Indians to govern themselves, declaring them to be inferior because they did not use the land for property and capital accumulation—easily justifying their policies against Indigenous peoples as a way to fill up that empty, inefficiently used land in need of “settling” (Veracini 2015).

Whiteness can be understood as a social concept, that is, white settler-colonials in power formed this social category as a way of discursively signaling the supposed racial superiority of white people over all other People of Color (Cabrera et al 2017; Whitehead et al. 2021). This racialization supported the creation of structured white supremacy codified in property, law, education, literature, economics, politics—becoming omnipresent in virtually every arena of U.S. social life (Whitehead et al. 2021; Cabrera 2019; Haney-López 1996; Morrison 1992). Settler colonialism is a “structuring structure” that “creates a foundation of violence (white supremacy, racism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy)” upon which nation-states construct dominant social institutions (Wolfe 2006; Whitehead et al 2021; Rocha Beardall 2022). Settler colonialism acts as the physical earth that supports foundational ideologies like white supremacy, racism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy; nation-states like the US construct dominant social institutions to maintain norms and values—which are both influenced by and support these violent ideological “foundations” and ultimately, maintain the status quo of settler colonialism. Relations of conquest and colonialism are not limited to one historical era but rather remain ongoing, given that they are required to maintain both the literal and figurative grounds for capital accumulation, dominant social institutions, and government in the US (Stein 2017). As a dominant social institution, the US higher education system is both influenced by and continues the above foundational ideologies.

Collective Identity and US Settler Colonialism

Identity as a concept in the social sciences is highly contested, as well as highly varied in what make up the fundamentals of an individual's identity—if there are even any fundamentals present; however, there is some consensus on the social aspects of the self and the extent to which individuals define themselves through relationships to others and to various social groups (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Brewer 1991; Baumeister & Leary 1995). Specifically, the pursuit of connectedness and belonging reflect a fundamental human motivation; self-evaluation is derived from social identities or individuals' attempt to define themselves through their immersion in relationships with small groups and with larger collectives (Brewer, 1991; Brewer and Gardner 1996). The pursuit of connections with others can be seen as a fundamental element of understanding one's self-identity; thus, collective identity can be understood as “a shared sense of belonging to a larger community, promoted by symbolic rituals, places, and objects....” (Wimberley et al 2015). Boundaries are necessary to maintain the existence of any collective identity—there has to be a division between “us” and “them” (Hunt and Benford 2007); groups use symbolic places, objects, events, and narratives, and they socialize these into new members (Wimberley, Katz, and Mason 2015).

Historically in the US, once territoriality was mostly established, settler colonials began to focus on the production of social institutions through laws and policies that normalized settlement, Indigenous exploitation, and predatory accumulation (Rocha Beardall 2022). These institutions organize social life around a set of norms and values, socializing community members on matters of family, economy, religion, law, and education. Within this process, the settler-colonial and white supremacist parameters or symbolic boundaries in which social organizations function are established (Rocha Beardall 2022; Stein 2017; Stein 2019). This socialization of norms and values can be seen as a function of collective identity, that is, as new group members in US society are socialized, they are taught the symbolic boundaries of not only dominant social institutions but the violent ideologies and social categories those institutions inherently rely on to maintain US settler colonialism. In the following section, this intersection between US settler colonialism's symbolic boundaries and collective identity within the university context is further explored.

US Settler Colonialism, the University, and Collective Identity

The US higher education system is intrinsically linked to imperialistic and capitalistic policies that fuel the intersections of race, property, and oppression (Patton 2016). Early on, universities were instruments of expansionism, weapons for the conquest of indigenous peoples, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery (Wilder 2013). Through the use of racialized institutional logics, US higher education institutions became racialized organizations, or the sites of white citizenship reproduction. As Rocha Beardall argues, “racialized organizations are inherently settler,” they are “the space in which settler interests are rehearsed, take meaning, and are acted upon” (Rocha Beardall 2022). As a primary socializing agent of citizens, the US higher education system “functions...without the need to express this [settler

colonial] directive explicitly because the interests themselves are embedded within the shared goals and values,” allowing them to become part of their campus identities—regardless of their individual histories or public or private basis (Rocha Beardall 2022; Stein 2017).

Thus, US universities instill settler colonial interests to become embedded into their student body’s collective identity through formal and informal educational practices; as stated above, collective identity can be understood as “a collective sense of identity: a shared sense of belonging to a larger community, promoted by symbolic rituals, places, and objects...” (Wimberley et al 2015). It should be noted that collective identities do not require personal relationships among all group members, rather, it just requires that the individual member of the group feels a shared sense of belonging to the group—this allows for students to identify themselves as part of the collective student body identity even at universities with large populations (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Collective identity boundaries consist of symbolic places, objects, events, and narratives that are socialized into new group members by current group members in order to continue on the collective identity (Wimberley et al 2015). Over time, boundaries may be maintained, modified, or discarded to fit the current needs of the group—making the production of collective identity a fluid process that relies on the consistent articulation of the symbolic boundaries between “us” and “them” (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Wimberley et al 2015). Within the context of the university, symbolic boundaries urge students to identify with their chosen college and with one another (Garwood 2011). Some such boundaries include possession of college-identified symbolic objects and the participation in classes, meals, and other ordinary ritual interactions with faculty, staff, and fellow students; as well as attending organized ritual events like football games (Bronner 2012; Nielsen 2011; Wimberley et al. 2015).

Additionally, boundaries of student collective identity are often geographic, which Wimberley et al. define as “on-campus places, delineated by symbolic objects located within them, as well as events and actions related to those places and objects” (2015). These locations are often situated in the context of the surrounding landscapes, in other words, students tend to share a “sense of place,” that can be so strong that the university is referred to as a “home” (Nielsen 2011; Wimberley et al. 2015). Students come to figuratively own the landscape around them, exercising “significant (albeit hardly hegemonic) ownership over campus symbols despite the administration’s legal authority over that space” (Wimberley et al. 2015).

The university is a socializing agent and racialized organization dependent upon the settler colonial interests embedded within it. These values are implicitly socialized into students through their collective identity—allowing a latent student identity boundary to form and be embraced by the student body. Though all US universities and colleges are founded upon stolen American Indian land, there are some PWIs (Primarily White Institutions) who have stronger affinities for certain American Indian nations—whether geographically real or culturally perceived to be real. In the case of university campuses with strong, documented geographical connections to specific American Indian nations, students who “figuratively own the landscape around them” have the capacity to be influenced by settler colonial logics—already embedded

into their campus collective identity—to cultivate and engage with settler colonial narratives; through these narratives, students can selectively remember events and express their collective identity as both related to, distinct from, and dominant to the American Indian group in question.

American Indian Stereotypes Transformed into Settler Colonial Narratives

The concept of exoticism refers to the Western positionality that white supremacist, patriarchal, and heteronormative cultural traits are the normative experience that all other phenomena should be and are compared against (Arnold 2003). It is a socially sanctioned assumption that we should view any cultures, people, and traditions that are non-Western or non-Euro-centric as the other, and that the Western and Eurocentric is the necessary measuring stick by which “normative” citizens can assert their own identity (Arnold 2003). In order to define what one is, it is often necessary to define what one is not; thus, the cultural understanding of what the other is, is socially constructed, idealized, and otherwise twisted to fit the needs of the observer (Logan 2019; Arnold 2003; Strong 2013). Exoticism relies upon the use of romanticization, or the act of describing, constructing, or believing that something is better, more interesting—or more exotic—than it might be when viewed with another lens.

Stereotypes can be defined as an exaggerated, essentialist, or distorted generalization or belief about a specific group or category of people that often focuses on unlikely or extreme features to divide what is “normative” from what is “exotic” “romanticized” or “foreign” (Bordalo et al 2015; Adorno 1950; Schneider 2004). When expressed by social actors, stereotypical thinking implies an overreaction to information that generates or confirms a stereotype, and underreaction to information that contradicts it; stereotypes are often informed by violent ideologies and thus, help create and maintain the basis for prejudice and discrimination between dominant and minority groups (Bordalo et al 2015).

In the post-WWII era, much research has been devoted to the how, why, and to what extent the tactics of propaganda and stereotypes work. In recent years, scholars like Richard Dyer have become interested in understanding who controls stereotypes, defines them, and what interests they serve (2000). Walter Lippmann asserts that stereotypes typically have underlying ideology that places the user above the “object” being signified (1998). In presupposing the natural domination of one group over another, stereotypes imply that the people they represent are inferior or deficit in comparison (Fitzgerald 2014). Stereotypes are satisfying to dominant groups because they make members feel better about themselves; structurally they need an antithesis to make sense, a dichotomy of good vs. evil—which is particularly comforting to some white audiences by pandering to their prejudices (Fitzgerald 2014; Baldwin 1963).

Leslie Fiedler examined how these stereotypes are used as justification for subjugation and extirpation, as well as the myriad of ways Euro-Americans (mis)appropriated the identities of American Indians as their own (1968; Fitzgerald 2014). The use of negative stereotypes to dehumanize Indigenous peoples can be explained through “colonizer discourse,” or the need to convert the subjugated population into degenerates in order to justify conquest; in reading stereotypes through this context, the motivating force of U.S. settler colonialism to gain Native

land and resources is seen clearly (Fitzgerald 2014; Glenn 2015). For the purposes of this thesis, Fitzgerald's concept of "colonizer discourse" is further specified as the settler colonial narratives used by individuals to maintain their sense of identity in relation to American Indians—the ancestral "other" that inspires fantasy, longing, paternalism, fear, and many other states of being (Hughey 2014; Fitzgerald 2014). These narratives can be divided into many categories, with the most significant themes emerging from this study being: *Exoticism and Romanticism*; *Ancient Peoples*; and the *Duality of Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples*. Each narrative is discussed in further detail in the Methods and Analysis chapters.

Contribution to the Literature

Part of the process of student identity-making includes the use of selective remembering: the conscious or unconscious processes of determining what details to include or exclude when constructing narratives about the past and present, particularly when constructing narratives of past and present group identity. Students at WCU use selective remembering to form a campus identity based in part on EBCI history, culture, and connection to the land WCU occupies. Each of the significant themes listed above is a type of narrative implicitly or explicitly being used in the Western Carolina student identity-making process as shown through their student-written articles.

My analysis in this thesis thus traces the expression and development of settler-colonial narratives as they are embedded in a specific, concrete campus setting; within this setting, those narratives and the stereotyped "knowledge" of the Cherokee people that they contain are taken possession of by a particular group of people to become part of their own group identity. The mindsets that students take away from colleges and universities are much more than just academic knowledge; it has considerable cultural impact over the course of their lives and the information they choose to explicitly or unknowingly implicitly share with others. Thus, the campus setting has particular significance as a site where such settler colonial stereotypes are shared and reinforced among a large number young adults who disperse geographically after graduation.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

The following is an overview of the qualitative methods of analysis relied upon to conduct this study. The data sources for this thesis are individual newspaper articles from the *Western Carolinian* gathered from a subpopulation of WCU student newspaper articles relevant to this study. This chapter will address the data source, sampling procedure, the themes found, and the coding procedures used.

Data Source

The source of data for this project are articles from Western Carolina University's student-run newspaper. It ran underneath the name *The Cullowhee Yodel* from 1924 to 1931, before being renamed *The Western Carolinian* in 1933. Beginning in 1999, it began to be published online. Although it is not the university's only news source or student publication, it is both the longest-running and the only student-run publication officially supported by the university. Other student publications are either independently run or departmentally supported operations.

At the time that I was collecting articles for this thesis, in 2021, all of WCU's publications were housed in the Hunter Library Digital Collections archive. The Digital Collections archive had all available copies of the *Western Carolinian* uploaded, as both a high-resolution pdf and a transcript. In 2019, Western Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Asheville formed the Southern Appalachian Digital Collections Partnership in order to facilitate easier access to "unique regionally focused digitized materials that document the history and culture of Southern Appalachia" (Southern Appalachian Digital Collections n.d.). Though the partnership formed in 2019, it was not until late 2021 or early 2022 that the online archive titled *Southern Appalachian Digital Collections* officially became the host of all of WCU's digital publications. I did not engage with this collection to gather any data, though I will utilize it in any further research endeavors based on this thesis.

Sampling Procedure

In the 2019-2020 school year, in order to fulfill the graduation requirements of the Honors Program I was enrolled in at Western Carolina University, I was required to complete a capstone project. Under the guidance of Dr. Mwaniki, a sociology professor in my department, I created a year-long independent study that would also function as my Honors Program capstone. As part of this project, I began collecting data from the Hunter Library Publications archive, which contained articles from both *The Western Carolinian* and *The Reporter*, the faculty publication. At that time, I searched the archive for terms related to the Cullowhee Lily, recording everything that was relevant, regardless of the date. After completing the capstone, I kept all of the data I had gathered in multiple text files. Thus, when preparing to engage with the

present study, I had both prior experience with the data of the archives as well as articles that fit the search parameters for my graduate thesis study.

I determined from having previous experience with some of the articles in the archive meant that relying on one sampling method alone would have been disingenuous to the research process; that is, skipping the years I know have relevant qualities from prior research would be a disservice to the overall project, leaving out needed context. Additionally, there were not enough articles in every tenth calendar year to supply a well-rounded snapshot of student narratives regarding the EBCI, nor how those narratives come together and become part of collective student identity. Thus, I gathered articles for analysis using two parallel sampling procedures:

1. I searched and downloaded all relevant articles within every tenth year, beginning with 1924, (i.e., 1924, 34, 44...) as that was the *Western Carolinian's* first year of publication. I will refer to this method as *systematic sampling* (albeit not a random method).
2. I searched for relevant articles collected for the purposes of my capstone project. This resulted in the addition of articles outside of every tenth calendar year to the initial dataset for this thesis; articles that depicted important events that I know about from my previous research project and experience as a prior student of WCU. I will refer to this method as *purposive sampling*.

In my thesis, I established that each article is an individual case, regardless of its length and were published in the *Western Carolinian* newspaper. Below are the steps I completed in my initial data collection:

1. My original search terms were: Cherokee(s), Indian(s), Cherokee Indians, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, EBCI, and the slur against American Indians, [R—s]. Ultimately, the search terms Cherokee(s) and Indian(s) encompassed all other terms used—that is, no additional data hits were obtained through those terms.
2. I searched the collection of articles I had retained from my capstone, discarding any that neither originated from the student newspaper, the *Western Carolinian*, nor that contained the above terms.
3. Beginning in its first year of publication, 1924, I began to search every tenth year, (i.e., 1924, 34, 44...) retaining all articles published that year that contained the search terms. When retaining the articles, I copied the transcript of the article into a Microsoft Word file and saved a high-resolution pdf copy of the corresponding page of the newspaper, i.e., the newspaper page containing the article in question.
4. I combined relevant articles from both sampling methods, compiling them into text entries in the qualitative analysis software, *Dedoose*.

The resulting dataset contained 77 individual articles from 1924 to 1994; the systematic sampling method resulted in 55 articles, while the purposive sampling method resulted in 22 articles. The exact frequency distribution of these articles can be seen in Table 2 located in *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*. I stopped collecting articles in the year 1994 as articles written

past 1999 were published directly online by the newspaper itself; thus, I could not search for articles written in 2004 in the library's digital collections archive. the next tenth year after 1994, because they were not available. I decided to skim all of the articles collected, choosing to discard any that:

1. Used search terms with meanings irrelevant to the present study (such as naming Cherokee County but not referring to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI))
2. Were written by known non-student-authors, such as WCU professors
3. Lacked substantive text to analyze
4. Had no relevancy to the concepts of WCU Student or Place Identity as detailed below.

After applying the above constraints, all of the articles collected from 1984 and 2 articles from 1994 were eliminated. Once I skimmed the remaining 8 articles collected from 1994, I chose to remove them from consideration. My reasoning behind this determination is as follows:

1. Changing narratives: When I skimmed the articles from 1994, I realized that the narratives being used by students had been updated to reflect more contemporary stereotypes like the Cherokee unfairly receiving money from the government and the weaponization of the child welfare system against the Cherokee. These narratives did not readily mesh with the narratives that came before, and I did not have the necessary context to explore them more fully, nor could I compare them to any later years (i.e., 2004 or 2014) without having to pull from a different archive. Additionally, in the articles I sampled, the topic tended to be the political controversy surrounding the Cherokee's decision to build a casino in the area, and WCU's choice to build a cultural arts center, presumably in response.
2. Practical concerns: adding any more data to the sample would have slowed down the process even further and provided too much material for this MS thesis to analyze.
3. Cultural concerns: The 1970s marked a shift in American perceptions about American Indians—after the civil rights movement, many minority groups began to follow their playbook and attempt to gain more recognition. One such group was the American Indian Movement (AIM) which designed events to achieve the goal of gaining public attention to highlight what American Indians endured, thus allowing for fuller or multi-dimensional understandings outside the settler colonial narratives that dominated before.

Applying all of the above exclusions resulted in a group of 25 articles which were then coded as described below. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of year of appearance for this sample of 25 articles.

Coding Procedures

I used the online qualitative analysis software *Dedoose* to code the articles identified the dataset. The steps of analysis I performed are detailed below:

1. Read each individual article carefully, to determine which themes are being represented, noting if the theme is particularly explicit, for example, the article “Indian Graves Exposed” published 2/5/1965 contains the line, “The hills and

valleys of Cullowhee are still yielding their relics of antiquity.” The phrase “relics of antiquity” is synonymous with the word “ancient” and thus is a clear indication of the narrative of *Ancient Peoples*, as discussed below.

2. Make necessary comments or clarifications, such as checking the PDF copy of the article against the text entries to clarify a word that may be obscured by stain or imperfection in the newspaper.
3. Determine the number of recognizable themes or narrative, as well as how many times I identified each throughout the final dataset of 25 articles. Count each occurrence of a recognizable theme or relevant search term; unfortunately, the highly varied nature of the articles—their subjects, lengths, purpose, and more—meant that I could not have a standardized excerpt length for each occurrence of a theme. When I refer to a “count” or “how often” a theme occurred, I am referring to mainly the significance of the narrative in shaping student identity; that is, I am imperfectly measuring the “amount” of fully-formed thoughts that indicate one of my narratives, whether that thought is a sentence or a paragraph long. A full list of themes I determined can be found in Table 4 in *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*.
4. After identifying what narratives were most significant in shaping student identity in my final dataset, I decided to exclusively focus on the narratives of *Exoticism and Romanticism*, *Ancient Peoples*, and the *Duality of Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples*; specifically, how these three narratives shape the overarching category of WCU Student Identity, and its supplementary category Place Identity. Table 5 lists the number of articles in which each of these three narratives occurs. I put all of the narratives as well as the identity category into an Excel sheet, organized by the date of the article and depicting the amount each narrative was present, recreated in Table 6 of *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*.
5. Using the Excel sheet as a guide, I grouped articles together based on the codes they showcased. For example, the article 1924 “[Leading Characters In History Of Cullowhee]” showcased all of the above narratives, as well as both student identity and place identity. Thus, I paired it with other articles that met the same parameters, rather than grouping it with an article like the 1924 “Normal School Enjoys Cherokee Indian Fair” which contains all of the parameters except for *Ancient Peoples*.
6. I printed all 25 articles and taped them to a trifold poster board so I could see them all at once. I then chose specific articles to refer to within the analysis section of this paper. *Appendix B* details the dates and titles of each of the 25 articles analyzed in the final dataset.

WCU Student Identity and Place Identity

Western Carolina University's identity as an institution is deeply tied to the surrounding communities of Appalachian people. It is these Appalachian people that WCU was founded to serve, and to whom it feels a desire to improve the lives of—originally in the role of a teacher's college. WCU's physical location and original purpose became part of the foundation of its identity, so that even when educating teachers was no longer the primary goal, a moral responsibility to educate the community persisted. Though WCU did not benefit from the Morrill Act and is not a land-grant university, it follows a similar belief system in defining themselves to be a steward of education. In addition to WCU's identity being tied to the geographic area it occupies, the Appalachian Mountains, campus identity is directly tied to the Cherokee people, as determined through the history of the Cherokee people as described by themselves, through historical documentation such as treaties, and an extensive archeological record found on campus. WCU specifically occupies the former site of the Cherokee town Tali Tsisgwayahi ("Two Sparrows Town"), Sparrows", "a place that traditional histories identify as the Cherokees' original settlement in the southern Appalachians, and a home of the Nunnehi, the "Immortals." (Eastman et al. 2022). It is impossible to physically or metaphorically remove the Cherokee's presence from the land that WCU occupies. Generally, all US universities are racialized organizations founded upon stolen American Indian land and are dependent upon embedded settler colonial interests; as socializing agents performing the role they were created to fill, universities pass these values on to their students through their collective identity. At WCU, these embedded settler colonial interests become intertwined with the strong, documented geographical connections WCU has to the Cherokee people; thus, WCU students who "figuratively own the landscape around them" have the capacity to be influenced by settler colonial logics—already embedded into WCU's campus history—to cultivate and engage with settler colonial narratives (Wimberley et al 2015). Place identity becomes inextricably bound to student identity through the student-authors' representation of the Cherokee as part of the land's history, and thus, part of the students' history.

Narratives and their Definitions

Part of the process of student identity-making includes the use of selective remembering: the conscious or unconscious processes of determining what details to include or exclude when constructing narratives about the past and present, particularly when constructing narratives of past and present group identity. Students at WCU use selective remembering to form a campus identity based in part on EBCI history, culture, and connection to the land WCU occupies. Each of the following themes is a type of narrative implicitly or explicitly being used in the Western Carolina student identity-making process as shown through their student-written articles.

“Exoticism/Romanticism”

Refers to the idea that the Cherokee are considered to be exotic by the local non-Cherokees and that their existence is romanticized. Part of this romanticization stems from contemporary settler-colonials’ ignorance about the survival of American Indians and continued belief in their “ancient” or stereotypical appearances, such as those seen in popular media. Various aspects of American Indian tribal or traditional ways of life, history, and culture are romanticized. Non-Cherokees residing around the area of Cullowhee are particularly interested in Cherokee history as it relates to the land they occupy, as well as the artifacts that can be found on that land—and usually considered to be the personal property of the settler-colonials who obtained them.

“Ancient Peoples”

Refers to the narrative that the American Indians, specifically the Cherokee in this case, were ancient people who lived on WCU and nearby lands long ago and are gone now—often with no clear answer on where the American Indians have “gone” to. Users of this narrative often heavily imply that these Indians are extinct, or at minimum, no longer exist in the original savage form conceived of by settler-colonials in popular media such as the photographer Edward Curtis’s life-defining project, *The North American Indian*, wherein he sought to record the culture and lifestyle of American Indian tribes before it was “lost forever” (Gascoigne n.d.). This collection is arguably one of the most influential visual representations of the American Indians, providing the foundation in which later romanticized versions could be built—such as those found that rose to popularity beginning in the 1950s with the airing of Westerns, or TV shows depicting the western frontier and imagined realities of the cowboys and “Indians” residing there (Fitzgerald 2014). Of course, this narrative of the “disappeared native” is untrue, as Indigenous peoples still exist today. In the case of the EBCI, they were in close proximity to WCU still, of which students were aware of, based upon their social outings to Cherokee, NC first reported in 1924, the inaugural year of the student newspaper.

“Duality of Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples”

As a duality, the narratives of “*Uncivilized*” and “*Civilized*” Peoples function as two halves of a whole— always appearing within the same article and even occasionally within the same excerpt. In other words, the explicit use of the *Civilized Peoples* (CP) narrative at minimum implies the existence of the *Uncivilized Peoples* (UCP) narrative, and vice versa. Each half of the duality is defined below:

“*Uncivilized Peoples*” is the narrative that Indigenous peoples and their traditional ways of living are uncivilized when compared to those of the settler-colonials. The focus is on implicit or explicitly stated judgments that the Cherokee people are inferior, with a more subtle reference to the asserted superiority of the settler-colonials. This narrative is often found in conversations about the exotic culture of the Cherokee that focus on their lack of knowledge of modern

technology, and on their lack of emphasis on individualism and capitalism, among other traits settler-colonials perceive as inferior compared to their own.

“*Civilized Peoples*” is the corresponding narrative in which the main focus is the asserted superiority of the settler-colonials, and on their perceived accomplishments of modern technology, knowledge, and culture. Settler-colonials’ collective accomplishments are fueled in part by their removal of American Indians from their land and resources, as well as by exploiting slave labor and other minoritized groups. However, this dispossession and exploitation are very rarely recognized fully by the settler-colonials themselves, and any recognition that occurs often minimizes the role that settler-colonials as individuals played—instead blaming the abuse on the nation-state and its governing policies.

A sub-theme of the above duality is that of “modernizing the Cherokee” or the concept that the Cherokee needed to be helped along and brought into modernity by settlers to achieve their greatest potential. Part of these efforts of modernization include practices of forced assimilation, or the policy of “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” as Indigenous land was stolen and Indigenous children forced to attend schools designed to strip away their cultural heritage in order to “civilize” them (Hughey 2014).

Readers should note that the three narratives described above are closely tied to and in some ways overlap with each other, as one might expect to find in analyzing a set of cultural narratives. For example, the duality of civilized and uncivilized peoples could be thought of as a specific form of exoticism.

Throughout the coding process, I developed many codes and themes, but ultimately decided to discuss in this thesis ones I deemed most significant in the process of student identity formation in my data analysis. The full list of unused codes can be found Table 4 in *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

As stated previously, I developed many codes and themes throughout the analysis process but ultimately settled on ones that I determined to be the most significantly connected to the process of WCU student identity formation in my data analysis. The full list of unused codes can be found Table 4 in *Appendix A: Tables and Figures*. These narratives are labeled as follows: *Exoticism & Romanticism, Ancient Peoples, and the Duality of Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples*. The following is an exploration of some of my findings.

WCU Identity: The Progress of an Idea and Occupation of Tali Tsisgwayahi

WCU's identity as an institution is deeply tied to the surrounding communities of Appalachian people. It is these Appalachian people that WCU was founded to serve, and to whom it feels a desire to improve the lives of—originally in the role of a teacher's college. As stated by a student-author in "Robinson to take post Saturday," written in honor of "First Founder's Day":

There never was much to the Cullowhee school in those early, primitive days except an idea that mountain boys and girls, deprived for generations, deserved a chance at education...a thought inherent in the founder's early gospel proclaimed to the people of the area (10/24/1974).

In proclaiming that its early "gospel" is the idea that "mountain boys and girls...[who] deserved a chance at education," WCU as an institution inherently hinges on the location and identities of the students it serves. That is, if WCU is meant to serve "mountain boys and girls" then being located in the Appalachian mountains becomes an integral part of its identity. The "mountain boys and girls" being referred to here are settler-colonial children of the early Appalachian settlers, who live in remotes areas with little access to the "civilized" education being offered in less impoverished and rural regions. WCU's physical location and original purpose became part of the foundation of its identity, so that even when educating teachers was no longer the primary goal, a moral responsibility to educate the community persisted; as stated in the above article, "That is, to say, the idea itself has progressed" (10/24/1974). Though WCU did not benefit from the Morrill Act and is not a land-grant university, it follows a similar belief system in defining themselves to be a steward of education; even though WCU has grown quite large and powerful in the region, they still see themselves as the small school with a grand, and noble mission.

In 2022, Western Carolina University (WCU) professors of archeology Eastman, Riggs and Steere published "Tali Tsisgwayahi: Cherokee Landscape and Campus Archaeology at Western Carolina University" as part of *The SAA Archaeological Record* journal. Within this article, they describe the history of WCU as described by the Cherokee people and supplemented by the extensive archeological record found on campus:

Western Carolina University's (WCU) central campus in Cullowhee, North Carolina, was built on the former site of a Cherokee town called Tali Tsisgwayahi

("Two Sparrows Town"). The archaeological record indicates extensive use of the Cullowhee Valley by Cherokees and their ancestors for millennia... It is the only [North Carolina] public university established on the site of a named Cherokee town, and, arguably, a traditional sacred place...a place that traditional histories identify as the Cherokees' original settlement in the southern Appalachians, and a home of the Nunnehi, the "Immortals." (Eastman et al. 2022).

WCU's occupation of "a named Cherokee town, and, arguably, a traditional sacred place" means that its identity as an institution is deeply tied to the Cherokee people, not just the Appalachian people it was founded to serve. Though physical land that WCU occupies once belonged to and was cultivated by the Cherokee people and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who now live less than 20 miles away, the Cherokee are not the "people of Western North Carolina." They are the ancient ancestors of WCU, but they are not part of the founders nor the inheritors of WCU.

WCU Student Identity and Place Identity

Student body collective identity is typically associated with symbolic boundary markers such as recognizable architecture or geographical features, the use of particular phrases or sayings, college-identified merchandise, ritual activities like meals, classes, or sporting events, and narratives that connect the other markers (Wimberley, Katz, Mason 2015). At WCU, many such student collective boundary markers directly or indirectly reference the Cherokee people who previously occupied the land WCU is built on, as evidenced in place names and similar examples in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis. It is impossible to physically or metaphorically remove the Cherokee's presence from the land that WCU occupies. Thus, if "Western Carolina University—whatever else it may be—is a people's school"—that is, it belongs to the people it serves—then the "traditional sacred place" that it occupies and the history deeply tied to that land metaphorically belongs to those students it serves. As stated previously, the university's purpose in society is to act as a socializing agent, teaching and reinforcing norms, values, and traditions into generations of students. In general, all US universities are racialized organizations founded upon stolen American Indian land and are dependent upon embedded settler colonial interests; they pass these values on to their students through their collective identity. At WCU, these embedded settler colonial interests become intertwined with the strong, documented geographical connections WCU has to the Cherokee people; thus, WCU students who "figuratively own the landscape around them" (Wimberley et al. p 10) have the capacity to be influenced by settler colonial logics—already embedded into WCU's campus history—to cultivate and engage with settler colonial narratives. Place identity becomes bound to student identity through the student-authors' representation of the Cherokee as part of the land's history, and thus, part of the students' history and inheritance.

Part of the process of student identity-making includes the use of selective remembering, or the conscious or unconscious processes of determining what details to include or exclude when constructing narratives about the past and present, particularly when constructing narratives of past and present group identity. Students at WCU have used selective remembering

to form a campus identity based in part on EBCI history, culture, and connection to the land WCU occupies. The following are excerpt examples from a few articles that demonstrate some of ways in which student identity and place identity is expressed by the student-authors; this topic will be revisited in later sections of the analysis.

5/1924 CLIMATE AND RECREATION

Western Carolina University is situated in the northern Cullowhee Valley, centrally located along the Tuckasegee River in the Appalachian Mountains of southwestern North Carolina (Eastman et al 2022). In the article, CLIMATE AND RECREATION, the student-author pitches WCU's location in the Appalachian Mountains as a reason to attend summer school:

To the student who considers' climate and recreation as important in selecting a place to attend summer school, Cullowhee offers decided advantages... The altitude and mountain breezes render the climate delightful throughout the summer with temperature mild during the day time... Provisions have been made for a variety of outdoor recreations, such as tennis, volleyball, basketball, and baseball. Swimming is also a favorite sport for the summer students (5/1924).

After the student-author names a few of the local notable peaks "which may easily be visited at week-ends without missing any classes," they state:

To these might be added still other places of national reputation within a few hours' drive from the School, as Mt. Mitchell, Chimney Rock, Grove Park Inn, Biltmore Estate, Indian Reservation (5/1924).

In describing the benefits of attending the school, the author invokes multiple places of some cultural or geographic significance that are easily accessible, one of which is the Cherokee Indian Reservation. The student-author then continues, "Groups of students and faculty members make week-end visits to practically all of these places every summer," indicating that traveling to the reservation is a popular and frequent occurrence and demonstrates the exotic nature of the Cherokee people in the eyes of the local non-Cherokees; that is, the Cherokee Indian Reservation is so prominent in the lives of the students and the area itself that it worth listing as a perk of attending summer school in Cullowhee (5/1924).

7/1924 SOCIAL ACTIVITIES and 7/1924 FROM CULLOWHEE TO CHEROKEE

In the following July of 1924, two articles explicitly reinforce this sense of exoticism regarding the Cherokee and the Indian Reservation. The article FROM CULLOWHEE TO CHEROKEE is a poem depicting the trip to Cherokee, while the article SOCIAL ACTIVITIES provides a more specific, nonliterary account of the same trip.

Beginning the nonliterary article, the student-author explains that weekend trips "made under the auspices of the School, and open to everyone" have been "been the most outstanding feature of the social life at the Summer School" (7/1924). Describing a recent trip, the student-author states, "Almost a hundred students and teachers were transported in automobiles and trucks to the Reservation, thirty miles distant, where they spent the day. After looking over the

habitations of the Indians and the Reservation School, the party enjoyed a picnic lunch, which had been prepared at the expense of the School” (7/1924). In stating that the students and faculty on the trip looked “over the habitations of the Indians” the student-author expresses the *Duality of Uncivilized and Civilized Peoples*—non-Cherokee people are inspecting Cherokee homes to see how far they have progressed into modernity.

In describing the same trip, the poem FROM CULLOWHEE TO CHEROKEE by student-author Herman Oliver, discusses the purchasing of souvenirs by the students to commemorate their trip: “We soon began to look for things, / And found some baskets, pipes, and rings (7-1924). He then states, “A “cherk” came by and said “see-oo,””/ But Bess replied with “howdy-do.”/ (But don’t forget I’m telling you / Just what her friend declared was true.)” (7/1924). Though in my research I could not find other instances of the term “cherk,” nor of it being considered offensive, given the location of the students in the article, it is presumably a shortened version of Cherokee Indian. When considered in conjunction with the SOCIAL ACTIVITIES article, it is possible that the term is indicating a belief that the Cherokee people are uncivilized and exotic in comparison to the students—the Cherokee person depicted by the author relies upon the stereotype that American Indians are unintelligent, and unable of speaking English fluently; thus, are not easily understood by the non-Cherokee around them. In depicting this scene, the student-author both relies upon and helps corroborate the account of Bess’s friend that this event actually occurred and is not being made up for the purposes of the poem. He then concludes with, “We ate our lunch to leave quite soon / And got back home that afternoon. / Of all the trips from Cullowhee, / The best one yet was Cherokee” (7/1924).

Both articles, as well as the 5/1924 article, demonstrate that the students enjoy their proximity to the town and the exoticism of the Cherokee people living there, and go frequently. Both articles discuss the students being served lunch, with the more factual article explaining that the school itself provided funding for the lunch, and possibly for the entire trip. Regardless, it can be assumed that the Cherokee were known to the college—they are not an ancient people no longer residing in the area. These articles indicate that the Cherokee are considered to be a fun distraction, and possibly as a learning opportunity for the students—as they were encouraged to examine their “habitations” to see if and how they have progressed into modernity.

Exoticism and Romanticism

Selective remembering is a fundamental practice of creating and maintaining group identity; exoticism and its associated romanticization is one of the many ways that reality can be selectively altered or *remembered*. In the context of the student-written articles, the narrative of Exoticism and Romanticism (ER) refers to how the Cherokee were considered to be exotic by the local non-Cherokees and their existence, culture, and history were heavily romanticized. In order to cultivate the physical connection that WCU has to the Cherokee people, and thus how the Cherokee people fit into student identity, student-authors have to engage with ER when they engage with the Cherokee. At the minimum, the narrative of ER can be inferred from the choice to discuss the Cherokee as either the article’s main subject matter or in passing. Thus, the use of

ER can be seen in some fashion in all 25 articles analyzed in the final dataset. The influence of ER as a narrative becomes particularly clear in articles that focus on the history of WCU or of the surrounding area, many of which strongly indicate place identity. The following are excerpts from articles that portray some of the ways in which student-authors exoticize and romanticize the Cherokee people in their student newspaper.

2/1/1934 [Teachers College Owns Interesting Collection]

The land that WCU occupies was occupied by the Cherokee people for centuries, resulting in artifacts and objects being found throughout the land. Many of these found objects were housed in a museum on campus. In this article, a student-author explores some of these “many interesting relics of North Carolina history,” specifically the “numerous relics of Indian life during the Colonial period of the state.” One of these “relics” is described as: “An Indian peace pipe of beautiful and intricate design which was once the property of the college is now on display in the North American Indian Museum in New York City.” The student-author concludes the short article with,

Excavation work is now under way at an old Indian mound near the college, and it is believed efforts will be made to secure additional relics to add to the museum’s collection. Lack of funds has caused the college to lose many mementos of the early days of the state of North Carolina.

In the above excerpt, the narrative of Exoticism and Romanticism is invoked through the phrasing, “additional relics to add to the museum’s collection” and “mementos of the early days.” Both phrases also rely the narrative of Ancient Peoples, which is rooted in settler-colonial romanticization of the dying-out native, whose possessions are naturally and rightfully being inherited and owned by the modern and superior settler-colonials; to eventually be displayed in their museums, or presumably sold due to a “lack of funds.” The collecting of objects is a continuous pastime of the college, one that it feels entitled to as the owner of the land where the artifacts are uncovered; it is one of the many identity boundaries that students invoke when forming their identity, a point that will be further demonstrated in later sections of this analysis.

6/27/1974 Carolinian News Briefs

The Carolinian News Briefs are a series of advertisements and notifications of opportunities for students and community members to take advantage of. Below is part of the advertisement for non-credit workshops being held in early July of 1974:

Seven non-credit workshops in mountain crafts and culture are scheduled to begin Monday evening in the art department at Western Carolina University, Five of the seven involve on-site visits and study, and meet from 7 to 9 p.m. for one week, They are Cherokee Indian Culture, Cherokee Crafts, Indian Site Explorations, Pottery of the Southern Highlands, and Crafts of the Southern Highlands.... The workshops are open to all adults, Tuition is \$25 for the week-long workshops and \$50 for two weeks. Further information is available from the WCU Department of Art at 293-7210.

Of the seven workshops “in mountain crafts and culture,” five of them involve on-site visits and of those five, three workshops concern the Cherokee directly: Cherokee Indian Culture, Cherokee Crafts, and Indian Site Explorations. In other words, almost half of these “mountain culture” classes are actually Cherokee culture classes, demonstrating a different, more contemporary method of relying upon the Cherokee people to help bridge a “lack of funds” as discussed in the above 1934 article. However, instead of selling “relics,” a department of the university is selling access to Cherokee culture, crafts, and “site exploration”; in other words, they are attempting to capitalize on the presumed exoticism of the Cherokee people and the interest of local non-Cherokees. Additionally, the timing of the article suggests that it may be influenced by a broader societal interest in American Indian peoples—in the years following the Civil Rights Movement, other minority groups like the American Indian Movement began to push for greater publicity for their people. Additionally, there became an increased interest in the “aesthetic” and “traditions” of American Indians by many groups, such as the “hippies” who relied upon stereotypical American Indian attire to indicate their peaceful, down-to-earth nature (Fitzgerald 2014).

The above excerpted articles demonstrate some of the ways in which student-authors exoticize and romanticize the Cherokee people in their student newspaper to aid their formation of identity boundaries, particularly when referencing the history of WCU or of the surrounding area, as well as the collection of exotic and ancient Cherokee artifacts now owned by the university (a point of pride). Building upon the articles examined in the Exoticism and Romanticism section, it is obvious that place identity is distinctly related to the university, and thus, to the Cherokee. The distinctive and thus exotic connection between the university and the Cherokee people provides a foundation in which students can build identity boundaries, as well as modify them as necessary. In other words, the Cherokee (whether being viewed as a contemporary or ancient presence) are used as a point of pride or defining feature of the university itself.

Ancient Peoples

The narrative of Ancient Peoples (AP) is rooted in the overall narrative of Exoticism & Romanticism (ER); that is, ER is used by student-authors outside of AP, but AP cannot be used without relying on stereotypes born out of the romanticization of the dying-out native, whose possessions are naturally and rightfully being inherited by the modern and superior settler-colonials. Within the AP narrative, the Cherokee were an ancient people who lived on the lands of WCU (and surrounding areas) long ago and are gone now—often with no clear answer on where they’ve “gone” to. It is often heavily implied that they are extinct, or at minimum, no longer exist in their stereotypically original, savage form. The narrative is supported through the discovery and ownership of mementos or relics of the Cherokee people, as well as through the selective articulation of narratives by the student-authors that portray the Cherokee people as part of *their* past. Place identity becomes inextricably bound to student identity through the student-authors’ representation of the Cherokee as part of the land’s history, and thus, part of their

history and inheritance. The following are excerpts that demonstrate how the narrative of Ancient Peoples is implicitly or explicitly invoked by student-authors in their articles.

3/1924 LEADING CHARACTERS IN HISTORY OF CULLOWHEE

“[Leading Characters In History Of Cullowhee]” published in March 1924, was the earliest reference to the Cherokee known throughout the publication history of the *Western Carolinian*, at this time known as *The Cullowhee Yodel*, and is the first article in the dataset to showcase the connection between student and place identity, the Ancient Peoples narrative. The title of the piece implicitly contains the narratives of Ancient Peoples and Exoticism and Romanticism: “[Leading Characters In History Of Cullowhee]”—the phrase “leading characters” implies dramatic and fictional subjects (they are *characters*, not people), while the use of *history* immediately relegates the Cherokee to the past. The article begins with a direct connection between the land, the Cherokee, and the identity of WCU as an occupier/owner of that land: “It was Long before the white man had heard the call of The Cullowhee Yodel when the great tribe of the Cherokee Indians lived here at Cullo-whee” (para. 1). In describing the matriarchal organization of the Cherokee people and their “little care for progress” the student-author states “their mode of living was peculiar to the race” and names the many tasks a Cherokee woman was responsible for because “the men were lazy about the house,” eventually stating that “occasionally she was made the Queen” as a reward for her efforts. However, there is no traditional concept of royalty in the Cherokee Nation like there is in the European dominant culture, as described by the Cherokee Nation in their website’s FAQ section:

Many people have the impression that the Cherokee historically had princesses. In fact, the title of "princess" in Cherokee culture never existed. There is the possibility that a chief's daughter may have been thought of as a princess by other visiting cultures, in much the same way that a king's daughter would have been called a princess. This position or title, however, was never used by the Cherokee (Cherokee Nation n.d.).

Thus, although there is a persistent stereotype that Cherokee princesses were abundant, this is simply Europeans putting their own language and gender rules onto another culture that they did not understand. Towards the end of the article, the student-author discusses the removal of the Cherokee people (portraying it as a mutual decision) and clearly evokes narratives of inheritance, history, and identity in discussing the creation of the school in flowery and biblical language:

“Surely a greater blessing awaited the heirs of the new heritage. The time came when Virginia heard the neighborly call of The Cullowhee Yodel as clearly as the Horne of Gabriel. She responded to the call by sending to us her beloved son and our former President, R. L. Madison like a Moses or Daniel(s) of old. And, too, many other States have heard the Ernest call and answered in clarion tones”

The student-author directly states that not only are the local settler-colonials of the area are inheritors of land implicitly forfeited by the Cherokee, they are destined for a “greater blessing” than their predecessors. Additionally, they have been tasked with creating a new heritage based upon the one they inherited, that can assumedly be passed on to new generations of students

joining the school and community. This is strikingly similar to the Christian doctrine involved in Manifest Destiny, and ties in the subsequent narratives of ancient peoples and civilization, discussed below.

2/5/1965 Indian Graves Exposed

As stated previously, the narrative of Ancient Peoples is supported through student discussions regarding the discovery and ownership of mementos or relics of the Cherokee people, which is often reported upon in the student newspaper, especially in regards to “new” discoveries happening because of campus expansion, as detailed by this article:

The hills and valleys of Cullowhee are still yielding their relics of antiquity... Earth-movers excavating the site of two new dormitories for Western Carolina College have exposed eleven Indian graves to add to the establishment of the region.

The overall narrative of Ancient Peoples relies on the implication that the Cherokee are “gone,” and often the “discovery,” use, and collection of artifacts left behind by the Cherokee is a sort of chain-reaction of possession and exoticism; that is, being able to view and possess an item from the Cherokee encourages the collection of more Cherokee artifacts, which furthers the viewpoint that these items are settler-colonials’ inheritance—left behind by the ones who used to live here. The student-author describes this process of discovery of the “relics of antiquity” as a “yielding” by the “hills and valleys of Cullowhee” which implies an ease and willingness of the land (and presumably, the ancient Cherokee people) to provide new items for the college’s exotic collection and the “establishment of the region.” In a later section of the article, the student-author describes the two organized excavations of the “town-house mound,” a topic that is repeatedly referred to throughout the final dataset:

An Indian mound once existed on the Old Town House Farm, now a part of the campus, long before the college came into being. In 1898 this mound was partially excavated by the Valentine brothers and many items were taken to their museum in Richmond. At that time, however, it was not known whether there was actually a village here, or whether the mound was an isolated one... Again, in 1956, it was necessary to level the remainder of the Indian mound because of expansion needs. Everyone had a field day, as people followed the path of the bulldozers to reclaim arrowheads and bits of bone pottery. Professor Dodson removed the main artifacts for the college, including skulls with teeth intact; identifiable human bone; arrowheads, large pottery fragments, and others.

The above excerpt demonstrates a sustained fascination with and assumed connection with Cherokee culture, artifacts, and history, which is demonstrated throughout many articles in the final dataset, including the 1934 article discussed above. The student-author describes physical proof of the Cherokee’s ancient presence, one that is referenced throughout many of the articles of the final dataset, including:

3/15/1930 THE INDIAN MOUND: IT LOOKS PROSAIC BUT IT HAS SEEN
ROMANCE

2/1/1934 TEACHERS COLLEGE OWNS INTERESTING COLLECTION

11/7/1945 Jackson County Once The Heart Of Cherokee Territory
9/16/1957 Western Carolina College Has Many Traditions
9/16/1960 “Evidence Shows De Soto May Have Visited Cullowhee”
10/16/1964 Cullowhee Valley Retains Signs Of Indian Heritage
7/9/1970 “Street names are irrelevant”

Due to the constraints of this thesis, each of these articles cannot be discussed in full, though they will be explored in future research.

In conclusion, selective articulation of narratives by the student-authors portrays the Cherokee people as part of *their* past, relying on the tangible proof of the Cherokee’s ancient past with the landscape of campus—a landscape that they have figuratively come to own and incorporate as a symbolic boundary marker for their collective identity boundaries (Wimberley et al 2015).

Uncivilized and Civilized Peoples Duality

As a duality, the narratives of “*Uncivilized*” and “*Civilized*” *Peoples* function as two halves of a whole— always appearing within the same article and even occasionally within the same excerpt. In other words, the explicit use of the *Civilized Peoples* (CP) narrative at minimum implies the existence of the *Uncivilized Peoples* (UCP) narrative, and vice versa.

In the narrative of “*Civilized Peoples*,” the main focus is the asserted superiority of the settler-colonials, and on their perceived accomplishments of modern technology, knowledge, and culture. Settler-colonials’ collective accomplishments are fueled in part by their removal of American Indians from their land and resources, as well as by exploiting slave labor and other minoritized groups—actions that are very rarely recognized by the settler-colonials (Glenn 2015).

In the corresponding narrative, “*Uncivilized peoples*” (UCP) the main focus is not on the settler-colonials but on implicit or explicitly stated judgments that the Cherokee people are inferior, with a more subtle reference to the asserted superiority of the settler-colonials. This narrative is often found in conversations about the exotic culture of the Cherokee, their lack of knowledge of modern technology (and, thus, their ancient or antique nature) and their lack of emphasis on individualism and capitalism, among other traits.

Within the dataset of 25 articles, the duality of *Civilized* and *Uncivilized Peoples* appears in 9 articles. However, they do not always occur in equally long passages nor within the same passage; there is not a recognizable pattern to determine why one appears more often than the other within each article. The following are excerpt examples from three articles that demonstrate some of ways in which the *Civilized* and *Uncivilized Peoples* duality is used by student-authors.

**(1939-5-13) “Today’s Motorists Follow Old Trails Made By Redskins: First Palefaces Followed Paths Worn By Indians On Hunt For Game”
Western Carolinian 50th Anniversary Edition**

In this article, the narrative of *Uncivilized Peoples* occurs three times, while the narrative of *Civilized Peoples* occurs twice. The article describes the modern roadway system as a pride of the area, and describes that system's Cherokee background, using the roadway system as a marker of civilization and superiority, like the above article. Beginning with the title, the AP and ER narratives are immediately apparent: the phrase "Today's Motorists Follow Old Trails Made By [R—s]" applies the concept of time passing (it is *Today's Motorists* following *Old Trails*—past tense); "First Palefaces Followed Paths Worn By Indians On Hunt For Game" continues to date the Cherokee as a subject—the paths, not roads, are *worn* down through constant use by *Indians On Hunt for Game*, or Cherokee people in search of food, materials for creating implements and other objects (which they would have done regularly). Continuing on to the first paragraph of the article, the references of history in the title become more apparent as the student-author focuses on the civilized nature of settler-colonial infrastructure as compared to Cherokee paths:

As the modern motorist glides smoothly along the well paved and well graded roads of Western North Carolina, he seldom pauses to think of the history to be found in the evolution of these roads. No one knows when this story begins. For countless centuries the Indians must have travelled along crude trails which carried them to their favorite hunting and fishing grounds. When the white man came to this section some of these trails had become fairly well established and were being used extensively by the In- [sic] (para. 1)

In the first sentence, the narrative of *Civilized Peoples* is immediately invoked, as the motorist is described as *modern* and the roads as *well paved and well graded*, bringing to mind the modern invention of asphalt roads and road maintenance. A subtler aspect of CP can be seen in the student-author's decision to describe the motorist as a single individual, which plays into settler-colonials' reliance on the narrative of individualism, contrary to the communalism seen in the Cherokee nation (Greene 2009). This individual is always male, as is the hypothetical person "gliding smoothly along the well paved and well graded roads" (though, the student-author of the time would likely counter "he" refers to either sex). In describing the man as a "modern motorist" the student-author implies that the man is wealthy enough to own a motor vehicle, and has enough leisure time to drive the "most scenic road system in this country," as stated in the last line of the article. The individual can be assumed to be a "white man," based upon the assumed level of wealth needed to establish the student-author's example—which is further cemented by the use of "Palefaces" and "white man" in the title and excerpt respectively. The narrative of *Uncivilized Peoples* and *Ancient Peoples* is invoked in the next sentence: "he seldom pauses to think of the history to be found in the evolution of these roads." Using "history," and later, "countless centuries" immediately dates the Cherokee as being ancient and thus long before the history of the region—a "story" that did not begin until the white man encountered this section of land and could craft his own written history. The student-author then describes the "crude trails" of the Indians, which were "well established"—again implying the passage of time and the AP narrative. These "crude trails" are the beginning of the modern highway system being

discussed in the article, the first step in the “evolution of these roads” and implying a hierarchy of civilization in which the Cherokee are the lowest and oldest rung. This statement reflects the Euro-western theories on the evolution between races used to justify racist, hetero-patriarchal, and settler-colonial practices needed to maintain white dominance of resources, wealth, and more.

Individualism is a fundamental element of capitalism, of civilization, and thus, is pushed by settler-colonials’ in their pursuit of natural resources and organized violence against American Indians who occupy that land (Fine 1993; Glenn 2015; Rocha Beardall 2022). One of the greatest examples of Americans’ belief in individualism, exploration of the country, and the freedom to do as one pleases is the creation of the interstate and state highway system. The system combined with a surge of vehicle manufacturing made traveling more appealing, easier to do, and more affordable than it had previously been (Seiler 2002). It also normalized the ownership of vehicles and created a disdain for public transport—where one has to wait on another’s schedule instead of having the freedom to pick up and go whenever (Ashmore 2019; Seiler 2002).

Again, returning to the concept of evolution and its progress into modernity, the student-author concludes:

The present system of road-building [sic] and upkeep is one of the finest in the United States. Almost all of the side roads are in excellent dition [sic], with a coating of sand and small gravel over a hard road bed. The main highways are hard surfaced with a tar and gravel combination or concrete. With the increased flow of tourists into this section, the state is turning its attention more and more to the improvement of roads and before long Western North Carolina may be able to boast of the finest as well as the most scenic road system in this country (para. 2)

The student-author implies that the local settler-colonials see themselves as civilized and having built modern infrastructure that is the “best” around when compared to other settler-colonial areas—and definitely as compared to the Indian trails it evolved from. In describing the types of roads and highways found in the region, and also stating the state’s intention to improve both to increase tourism (and increase tax revenue) the CP narrative is further heightened. When this article is compared to the following article, published in 1964, a continuity of relying upon roadways as a marker of the *Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples* duality is established, demonstrating its power as an identity marker for settler-colonials as a group, and possibly, for the locals of the region.

(2/28/1964) “Dillsboro Pocket of Tradition”

In this article, the narrative of Civilized Peoples occurs eight times, while the narrative of Uncivilized Peoples occurs twice. In the words of the student-author, the purpose of the articles is to interview Mrs. Minnie Dills Gray “a life-long citizen of that town [Dillsboro], [who] has written a book dealing with the early history of Dillsboro and the people who were responsible for its founding.” Implicit in this line is the settler-colonial “truth” that they *founded, discovered*

or *cultivated* the land, and that nothing of note occurred in the history of that land until it was converted by the “pioneers” into the “charming resort town” of Dillsboro (2/28/1964). This “truth” is rooted in concepts such as terra nullis and Manifest Destiny, and promotes the erasure and the believed antique status of American Indians by settler-colonials.

This rosy view of the first pioneers is seen in several places throughout the article, where their civilization efforts and accomplishments are touted by the student-author:

Many years have passed since the first pioneers stepped onto the land which is now called Dillsboro, but their memory combined with the fruits of their work will always remain bright in the minds of the residents of Dillsboro (para. 2)

Shortly after their marriage the Dills built a new home on a knoll overlooking Scotts Creek and the Tucakseegee River. This was the first house built in what is today Dillsboro. On the site of their new home the Dills planted young white oaks which have grown into towering trees and stand today as living monuments to them (para. 6)

The town stands as a reminder of its founders and of its glorious past. It is indeed a reminder of the growth of a few small colonies into a great and wondrous nation (para. 16)

Through the use of phrases like “fruits of their work” “living monuments to them” and “reminder of its founders and of its glorious past,” the focus is on the supposed superiority of the settler-colonials, not on the inferiority of the Cherokee, in fact, the first of two references to the Cherokee occurs in the article’s first paragraph:

Approximately 50 miles west of Asheville, lying in an enchanted valley flanked by the blue foothills of the Smoky Mountains, rests the town of Dillsboro: A small resort town, Dillsboro has hidden in its past a history which would be becoming to Daniel Boone or even the Cherokee Indians, for which this area is so famous (para. 1)

The student-author’s choice to use the Cherokee as a marker of fame as well as a marker of history invokes the *Uncivilized Peoples* narrative as well as incorporates the use of the *Ancient Peoples* narrative; in its implied antiquity, the comparison manages to remind the reader of the presence of the Cherokee and to dismiss them from contemporary relevance. They become the mythical or legendary reference point that the history of Dillsboro can be compared to and be better than—implying the Cherokee’s inferiority, and thus, their lack of civilization (and relevance to the modern-day achievements of the town). In paragraph 13, the student-author chooses to use a direct quote from Mrs. Minnie Dills Gray, where she imagines and romanticizes the history of the two oldest log cabins in the town:

They weathered the war between the states, and the scourge of the carpet bagger; they passed through that [sic] peril of the enemies who roamed the hills and valleys of this beautiful garden of Eden; they have seen the beaten paths of the moccasin footed Indian made into crude roads and later these roads into beautiful highways; and they could tell the eccentricities [sic] of neighbors and of family feuds which have never come to light. But these beloved old landmarks will keep their secrets until the last log has gone to decay.

In mentioning the Civil War, carpet-baggers, and the abstract “enemies,” Dills Gray is potentially implying the Southern false narrative of The Lost Cause, and the racialized and romanticized rhetoric it relies upon. In stating “beaten paths of the moccasin footed Indians,” Dills Gray immediately dates the Cherokee as being ancient and thus long before the history of the town. She uses the example of the roadway system as a marker of civilization and superiority, referring to the Cherokee’s paths as “beaten.” The above article was published in 1939 and when compared to this article, the reliance upon roadways as a marker of the *Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples* duality becomes even more apparent as an identity marker that continues through the decades in between.

She describes the roads created by the original settler-colonials to replace the paths of the Cherokee as “crude,” which creates a hierarchy of civilization in which the Cherokee are the lowest rung—below the original settlers who lacked today’s modern tools and thus far below the most modern and recent generations of Dillsboro locals. The “crude roads” were fashioned into better ones, and eventually turned into the highways, adding a phase of civilization between the contemporary Dillsboro locals and the ancient Cherokee. The evolutionary nature of this statement reflects Euro-western theories on the evolution between races used to justify racist, hetero-patriarchal, and settler-colonial practices needed to maintain white dominance of resources, wealth, and more. Lastly, the ER and AP narratives are again used to uphold the Cherokees’ uncivilized status in the last sentence: “But these beloved old landmarks will keep their secrets until the last log has gone to decay.” which relies on the romanticism of an imagined past and implies that the Cherokee are “secret” or unable to be found or talked to during her lifetime—they are not remembered like the beloved old landmarks.

(10/1924) “Normal School Enjoys Cherokee Indian Fair”

The article “Normal School Enjoys Cherokee Indian Fair” summarizes a student and faculty trip that was recently taken, and demonstrates both the narratives of CP and UPC once:

Thursday morning, October 9th, amid much laughter and excitement about eighty students and several faculty members of Cullowhee Normal left in trucks for the Indian Fair at Cherokee (para 1).

The student-author describes some of the activities the students participated in, many of which showcase the tourist/exhibitionist aspect of how locals treat the Cherokee—as a novelty to experience for a day, as a fun outing with friends. These activities included searching for “lollipops, Indian trinkets, the picture man, fortune teller and the Midway.” Another activity the student describes seemed to be the one of the main draws, if not the main draw in attending the “Cherokee Indian Fair”:

Most of the crowd took time to make careful examination of the agricultural exhibits. The farm products on display were excellent and the different varieties showed that the Indians know something about modern agriculture and crop rotation (para 3).

As typical of many county fairs, there was an agricultural showcase on display, which presumably contained items only created, grown, or built by the Cherokee themselves. The

narrative of *Civilized Peoples* first appears in the phrase “careful examination of the agricultural exhibits” which demonstrates the scrutiny given to the Cherokee to determine how well they have progressed into modernity—how well they have learned their lessons from the settler-colonials on how to be a “good” individual in the eyes of the state. Again, the word “modern” indicates the civilized nature of the of the settler-colonials when compared to the Cherokee, specifically in reference to “modern agriculture” which requires the use of technology to perform. Though some type of “crop rotation” has been practiced by agricultural societies throughout history, given the context of this article it can be assumed that the modern concept of crop rotation being referred to here is the crop rotation necessary for commercial agriculture in which crops are grown for their ability to sell in the market—not as crops needed for survival or grown as part of a subsistence farming lifestyle. This type of crop rotation typically means that the same crop is being grown for 3-4 seasons in a row, afterwards the field is left fallow for some time, and then another crop is grown in that field for 3-4 seasons, continuing the cycle (Bullock 1992). Modern or commercial agriculture typically requires growing the same crops over and over, especially those that are deemed valuable to the market like tobacco and other cash crops. These crops typically have little to no subsistence value, as farmers don’t diversify their crops enough to have balanced diets—if they are even growing food crops at all. The Cherokee used their own traditional farming systems for centuries, which maintained a balance between themselves and the land they relied on—and in which farming was performed for the good of the community, not just the individual (Greene 2009; Marsh n.d.). The Cherokee, like many American Indian nations, have an agricultural and cultural practice called the “Three Sisters” in which it was not necessary to rotate crops by years nor leave fields fallow to recover from overuse. According to Chavonda Jacobs-Young, “in agricultural parlance, 'The Three Sisters' are crops planted together in a shared space: maize, beans, and squash.... Developed through [I]ndigenous agricultural practices, these three plants protect and nourish each other in different ways as they grow and provide a solid diet for their cultivators” (Marsh n.d.). In complimenting the Cherokee on their “excellent” farm products on display, the student-author simultaneously lifts up their accomplishments and denigrates their previous traditional ways of life. In other words, the full duality of the CP and UCP narratives is demonstrated in this particular excerpt.

All of the above articles demonstrate some of the ways in which student-authors express the duality of “*Uncivilized*” and “*Civilized*” Peoples; that is, how they rely on commonly accepted narratives about American Indians—many of which are rooted in colonial times but modified to fit the current moment. Examples include the asserted superiority of the settler-colonials and their perceived accomplishments of modern technology, knowledge, and culture (or Civilized Peoples), in addition to the assumptions about the exotic culture of American Indians, their lack of modern technology (and, thus, their ancient nature), and their lack of emphasis on individualism and capitalism—fundamental elements of the structure of the US nation-state. Again, the Cherokee people are a fun distraction, a learning opportunity for the students, and a distinctive feature of campus identity and thus, student identity.

Student Identity-Making: The Interplay between Narratives

The above narratives do not exist in a vacuum, rather each narrative plays a role in defining the other and in contributing to the selective remembering process. It is in the interplay between the narratives that identity formation primarily occurs. The following explores the intersections between narratives, and those insights will be further discussed in relation to student identity in the Conclusion chapter.

(03/1924) “LEADING CHARACTERS IN HISTORY OF CULLOWHEE”

Consider again, the first article in the dataset, “[Leading Characters In History Of Cullowhee],” in which the history of Cullowhee and WCU is detailed, with a heavy emphasis on the Cherokee people who used to reside there. In the final paragraphs of the article, the student-author provides an explanation for the “disappearance” of the Cherokee, which heavily relies upon the narrative of AP. The student-author begins by summarizing the final years of the Cherokee’s presence:

The Indians lived here many years unmolested, but the time finally came when it was evident that a Keener people would possess this valuable land. The white man was Benton pushing his borders farther West and while the Indian recognized his Wright for Holden this territory, he Stillwell knew he could not resist white man’s hand. There was not room for both and the Indian realizing that the newcomer would always be a Bain to his happiness and concluding Bloodworth more than land decided to withdraw [sic] (para. 10)

The above excerpt shifts between a tone of inevitability and a sense of sympathy or expression of pity for the Cherokee—both of which fit into the narrative of AP. The student-author acknowledges the right that the Cherokee held towards the land, but does not acknowledge the violence enacted on the Cherokee by the settler-colonials. This violence took many forms, some of which include the coerced signing of treaties, the violence enacted by settler-colonial squatters who encroached on Cherokee territory, and the forced removal of the Cherokee people (Glenn 2015; Cherokee Historical Association n.d.). The physical violence between settler-colonial squatters is glossed over with the excuse of “[t]he white man was [bent on] pushing his borders farther West.” The coerced treaties and possibly even the forced removal of the Cherokee is excused through the phrase “while the Indian recognized his Wright for Holden this territory, he Stillwell knew he could not resist white man’s hand.” Both excuses express a sense of pity for the Cherokee and the rights they had to the land, but this pity is shallow and does not extend to condemning the actions of the settler-colonials. The student-author presents the forced removal of the Cherokee as an inevitable, if not entirely natural progression of modernity—it “was evident that a Keener people would possess this valuable land.” The Cherokee realized that “the newcomer would always be a Bain to his happiness and concluding Bloodworth more than land *decided to withdraw*” [emphasis added]. Their removal is not portrayed as a violent process enacted on the Cherokee, but one of resigned consent on behalf of the Cherokee.

After depicting the withdrawal of the Cherokee, the student-author relies on the duality of CP and UCP narratives to explain where the Cherokee "went to" once they were no longer part of the "ancient peoples" that had occupied the land before:

The Parton [sic] of the territory between the Indian and the white man marked the beginning of a new era for both. The government gave the Indians new and better dwelling places and assured them of their protection (para. 11).

The above excerpt is a clear example of the forced assimilation inflicted upon the Cherokee people, and how it was justified by the settler-colonial belief that they are inherently better and more civilized than the Cherokee. The Cherokee need to be taught and protected like children, and it is the responsibility of the settler-colonials to bring the Cherokee into modernity—to help them navigate this “new era.” It is worth noting that how the nation-state understands and applies “protection” is to continue to find ways to eliminate and assimilate American Indians as much as possible through any means necessary (Glenn 2015; Rocha Beardall 2022; Stein 2017). Though the student-author does not make it explicitly clear what group of Cherokee people they are referring to, it is likely that they are referring to the Cherokee Nation now located in Oklahoma, not the EBCI located 20 miles away from them. The EBCI formed Quallatown through the joining of private lands and homes, which allowed them to remain while the rest of the Nation was forcibly removed. Thus, at the time of the removal, the federal government was not responsible for providing the EBCI with “new and better dwelling places,” but they were obligated to do so for the Cherokee people in OK (though they did not adequately do so) (Kappler 1904; Romero 2022; Cherokee Nation n.d.). The last lines of the paragraph once again bring to light the reliance that the duality of CP and UCP has on the narrative of AP in order to function:

As a result the Indians now have their own Holmes, their farms their Barnes, and their schools. Instead of using shells and beads for money, they now know the Price their goods and the value of a Penny as well as we do [sic] (para. 11).

Signs of civilization to the settler-colonials, at least ones deemed significant enough for the student-author to include in this article, include a strong focus on the ownership of land, participation in commercial agriculture of some sort, the building of proper homes, and the use of schooling to teach Cherokee children how to be a “good” individual in the eyes of the state. In mentioning the use of shells and beads for money, the student-author relies upon stereotypical depictions of American Indians as primitive or uncivilized—ignorant of the value of their goods and thus, easily taken advantage of—to further illustrate the successful modernization of the Cherokee people. The student-author simultaneously lifts up their assimilation thus far and denigrates their previous traditional ways of life to show the progression from uncivilized to civilized that the Cherokee have undertaken. In other words, the full duality of the CP and UCP narratives is demonstrated in this excerpt.

(6/22/1967) “Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore”

The 1967 article, “Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore” is split into three sections, entitled “INDIAN MOUND” “OTHER EVIDENCE” and “VILLAGES” which detail the “evidence” of the Cherokee left in Cullowhee that have been “discovered.” The introduction demonstrates narratives of Civilized Peoples, Ancient Peoples, and Exoticism & Romanticism:

In an area rich with Indian lore, Cullowhee stands tall among her neighbors. The name itself is of Indian origin, meaning "valley of the lilies." This is said to refer to the once-prevalent growth of the amaryl-lis atamasco throughout the valley. Because a large portion of the Cherokee Indian Reservation lies within the boundaries of Jackson County, it would be reasonable to suppose that Indians once roamed these hills and valleys, even if there were no evidence. But there is evidence aplenty (para. 1)

Using the words “rich” and “Indian lore” provides an immediate air of ER that only continues with the phrase “Cullowhee stands tall among her neighbors,” which demonstrates how the connection of Cullowhee (and thus WCU, which essentially occupies it) to the Cherokee is seen as defining feature of the area as compared to other local places, one in which they can be proud of. The student-author defines the name Cullowhee as “of Indian origin” but incorrectly translates it to “valley of the lilies,” a popularly accepted settler-colonial narrative that is incorrect, as the actual translation can best be defined as “Place of Judaculla” or “Judaculla’s Place.” The incorrect translation places the focus on the settler-colonials’, not the Cherokee people and their important history concerning their great teacher, Judaculla. The connection to the Cherokee is again used as a distinguishing factor of the area, acknowledging the contemporary connection the Cherokee people have as they still reside in the area; however, that is dismissed in favor of the stereotype of the “Indians [who] once roamed these hills and valleys” and the “evidence” they left behind—evidence of an ancient people that needs to be uncovered and displayed by the settler-colonials who currently occupy the land. The article then describes the destruction of the mound on campus in 1956, then continues on with the following paragraph, entitled “OTHER EVIDENCE”:

The mound was not the only evidence of another culture found in this valley. In the late forties, when ground was being leveled for a baseball field, the bulldozers had to remove a fourteen-foot layer of earth. One of the first things uncovered was a cooking pit containing an animal skeleton. One after another of these pits came into view, until they totaled seventy, most of them with crude stone grills and the remains of various animals. At that same time, some underground tunnels were discovered near the present site of Reid Gymnasium. All these, of course, had to be destroyed in the name of progress. More recently, excavators on the new dormitory and cafeteria project exposed eleven graves. This time, the college had planned ahead, and some archeologiststs [sic]and anthropologists from the University of North Carolina were present to examine and evaluate any possible discoveries [sic]. (para. 3)

In the above excerpt, the narratives of *Civilized Peoples*, *Uncivilized Peoples*, *Exoticism & Romanticism*, and *Ancient Peoples* are all used. Beginning with the first sentence, the narrative

of ER and AP is apparent through the phrase “evidence of another culture found in this valley”—defining the Cherokee as “other” and existing in the past. In detailing the evidence found on campus of the Cherokee’s presence, the student-author uses phrases like “crude stone grills” “the remains of various animals” “exposed eleven graves” and “and some archeologiststs [sic]and anthropologists from the University of North Carolina were present to examine and evaluate any possible discoveries,” all of which fall into the *Ancient Peoples* narrative, as well as invoke images of the Cherokee as uncivilized, extinct, and otherwise unmodern. The phrase “All these, of course, had to be destroyed in the name of progress” may be intended and understood as being sarcasm from the student-author. However, the use of “had to remove” tends to indicate the writer viewed the excavation process with the assumption that the destruction was inevitable, and quite possibly that the replacement structures were more desirable than leaving the site(s) intact. This second interpretation relies on stereotypes of modernity and progress found in the CP narrative to explain what happened to the Cherokee artifacts and tunnels found by the on-campus excavators. The student-author ends the article with a summarization again reliant on all of the narratives used throughout the article, “The lilies for which she was named are practically extinct, but Cullowhee continues to prove her link with antiquity” (para. 4).

(1/31/1974) “Archives Has Something For You”

The 1974 article, “Archives Has Something For You” is a feature piece on the WCU Archives, their relocation to the Library, and their director, Dr. Richard W. Iobst. In the introduction of the article, the student-author describes the origin of the Archives:

The Archives, created in September, 1970, are settled comfortably in the newly renovated area on the ground floor which used to house the Science Annex. The Archives, under the direction of Dr. Richard W. Iobst, moved in to its new facility this September. It Is [sic] the only modern university-sponsored archives in western North Carolina. (para. 1)

The sentence “It Is [sic] the only modern university-sponsored archives in western North Carolina” is the strongest example of the CP narrative and its reliance on “modern” technology and ways of life in the above excerpt, particularly when viewed in the context of what the Archives contain, some of which are Cherokee-related. Midway through the article, the hours and purpose of the Archives is detailed, and invitation to browse the Archives is extended:

The services offered by the WCU Archives are principally for general research. Many undergraduate students and graduate students alike use the facility for research papers, especially related to events in western North Carolina. There is no fee involved in using the archival facilities and it is open for use by students, faculty, and the general public. The archives are open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. , Monday through Friday. Browsers are welcomed (para 1)

Towards the end of the article, the narrative of CP is joined with the narrative of UCP to detail some of the items that those the student-author describes as being “quite interesting to simply browse a bit it is quite at many items which cannot be found anywhere else” (para. 2). Some of

the items named by the student—most likely with some input from Dr. Iobst, the Archives director—concern the Cherokee people:

Also paramount in the archives' collections is the William Holland Thomas collection. Thomas was a state senator in the mid 1800's and an advocate of internal improvements. He was the founder of the Thomas Legion, during the Civil War and was instrumental in procuring land claims for the Cherokee Indians of North Carolina. This historic collection of 4,286 items contains personal correspondence, deeds, land grants, and Indian claims papers. (para. 2)

Related to the Thomas collection is that of James W. Terrell, as an Indian agent, was also instrumental in procuring fair treatment for the Cherokee Indians. His collection of 2,270 items includes tax records, deeds, correspondence, photographs, and maps. (para. 3)

Again, the Cherokee are being used as a defining feature, this time of not just the land of WCU but of its Archives too, as seen through the word “paramount” and nature of the person in question. Of the land claims that Thomas was instrumental in procuring, most were joined together to form Quallatown. The Cherokee of Quallatown were not targeted during the forced removal efforts as they were considered private US citizens and land-owners, not members of the Cherokee Nation. Quallatown later became the refuge for other Cherokee peoples who escaped the forced removal or made the long, dangerous journey back to North Carolina from “Indian Territory” in Oklahoma—the current members of the EBCI trace their ancestry back to the residents and refugees of Quallatown (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians n.d.; US Department of the Interior n.d.). Returning to settler-colonial ideals of civilization and history, it is notable that the Archives contain items secondarily related to the Cherokee—rather than items that originated from the Cherokee. The absence of written accounts from the Cherokee prior to the creation of their syllabary is likely the reasoning behind this gap; however, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the Cherokee Nation’s first newspaper that featured writings in both English and the newly created Cherokee syllabary, was debuted on Feb. 21, 1828 (Cherokee Phoenix 2023) and thus existed during the lifetimes and years both James W. Terrell and William Holland Thomas were politically active. It is conceivable that the Archives contained each of these collections at the time of this article being published, and that it is part of the “interesting and historically significant” items referred to by the student-author in the final lines of the article:

Wandering through the archives, one can find many more such interesting and historically significant items and collections. Dr. Iobst is willing to entertain any questions or comments about the WCU Archives of material located there in.

Regardless of whether all three collections were available at the same time, it is apparent that such items are prized by the Archives and deemed worthy of mentioning, and that students as well as community members are being encouraged to visit the Archives to view, among other things, items related to the Cherokee.

(10/24/1974) “Pageant [sic] to depict history of Western”

This article was printed during “Founder’s Day” week, and concerns one of the festivities available to attend:

On Saturday the new Western Carolina University amphitheater will be the scene of a resurrection. This resurrection will come in the form of ‘Dream A Long Shadow,’ by Lillian Hirt, a pageant depicting the history of WCU, “‘Dream A Long Shadow,’ part of the festivities planned for Founders Day, will last approximately an hour. During this brief period, however, centuries of change within this “valley of the lilies” will take place. The pageant consists of a series of narrations, each one followed or accompanied by a tableau depicting the event being spoken of. Although the action begins centuries ago when the Cherokee Indians inhabited this rural mountain area, most of the pageant is set in the late nineteenth century, when Robert Lee Madison first came to the Cullowhee area for a rest and decided to stay and develop a school for the training of teachers (para. 1)

By using the word “resurrection” when referring to a pageant depicting the history of WCU, the student-author immediately places the reader not only in the past, but in the *distant* past—centuries ago, when the “Cherokee Indians inhabited this rural mountain area.” The Cherokee are part of WCU’s history and must be discussed, however, they are a minor and *ancient* part of the area’s history and will only take up a small fraction of the pageant’s “brief” hour-long run time. The focus will instead be placed on the beginning of WCU as a teaching institution, and the actions of the much-lauded Robert Lee Madison, founder and patriarch of the college. The connection that the Cherokee have to Cullowhee—or rather, the connection WCU feels it has to the Cherokee people—is seen as defining feature of the area, of the institution’s history, and thus of student identity. The mistranslation of Cullowhee as “valley of the lilies” is also mentioned, and as explained in above subsection regarding the “Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore,” its inclusion places the focus on the settler-colonials, not on the Cherokee people. The article continues:

Attention will also be focused upon later Western Carolina administrators including Brown, Pow, Bird, Hunter, Reid, Carlton and Robinson. Cast members of “‘Dream A Long Shadow” include narrators David and Betty Hirt, both former students at Western Carolina, and Dr. Clifford Lovin as founder Robert Lee Madison. Several Cherokee Indians will be on hand to portray their forefathers. Also included in the cast are several WCU students, Cullowhee residents and some students from nearby Camp Lab School (para 1).

The pageant is both a student and community affair, “a culmination of the efforts and talents of WCU faculty members, alumni, and people from the surrounding area” (para. 2) In addition to those participants, “[s]everal Cherokee Indians will be on hand to portray their forefathers,” presumably in the very beginning of the play but no other times (para. 2). In this sentence, the student-author simultaneously acknowledges the contemporary connection the Cherokee people

have as they still reside in the area—and some will be on hand to portray “their forefathers”; however, that is dismissed in favor of the narrative of the Cherokee as ancient peoples who used to “inhabit” or occupy this area and are no longer present and must be resurrected. It is also interesting that these Cherokee individuals participating in the pageant aren't named specifically nor are their ancestors; this play isn't about them or their history. It's about WCU's interpretation of history and their image of the native as a background character in the larger tale of success being depicted.

(10/24/1974) “Robinson to take post Saturday”

In addition to the above play, another festivity to occur for “First Founder’s Day” is the inauguration of Dr. H. F. Robinson as Chancellor. However, the article begins not discussing the new Chancellor, but rather, the history of Cullowhee:

There is a little valley here where Indians once lived. In the quite peace along the banks of the youthful Tuckasegee River, they found in profuse splendor the flower to which they gave the name of “kullaughee.”

In a significant narrative move that mirrors the pageant discussed above (Dream A Long Shadow), the student-author begins the story of WCU with the Cherokee, but focuses not on the people but on the area as the place “where Indians once lived” (para. 1). Following that phrase with “the youthful Tuckasegee River” gives another implication that the Cherokee are “ancient”—they lived here so long ago that the river was their contemporary, that is both are very old and historic in similar ways. Like the above article, this student-author also defines Cullowhee as a Cherokee word meaning “valley of the lilies,” but also includes a new addition to the narrative that highlights the civilized and intelligent nature of “white man” who encountered the valley’s titular lilies:

It remained for the white man to identify it as the Atamasco lily (*Zephyranthes Atamasco*), which is not a true lily, but an amaryllis [sic], common in the piedmont and coastal plain, but rare in the mountain region (para. 1)

The Atamasco lily is not native to the mountain region, and it’s unlikely that it was as prevalent as argued by settler-colonials who mistranslated the name of Cullowhee—if it even existed at all (NC Native Plant Society n.d.). However, in saying that the lily is rare, not that it didn't exist, the myth of “valley of the lilies” is allowed to continue uncontested. The above quote implies that the lilies were ancient and that's why they're not around much anymore—like the Cherokee themselves, who named the lilies. Both have become a “rarity” in the area, something to be discussed but not seen. A similar line is used in the above 1967 article, “Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore,” however, this article makes the duality of CP and UCP more explicit through its discussion of *who* determined the true nature of the flower—the 1967 article merely mentions that there was once a “prevalent growth of the amaryl-lis atamasco throughout the valley (para.1) It is implied that Western knowledge, or the knowledge of the “white man” is superior and more accurate than Cherokee knowledge, demonstrated in the use of the flower’s scientific name and by providing facts about the flower itself (another difference between this usage of the lilies

narrative and the one found in the 1967 article). There is a separation between the civilized settlers, who recognize the true nature of the flower and the “Indians” who mistook the flower for a lily and can’t understand the complexity of Western knowledge—the kind of knowledge that will eventually be taught in the school occupying their land. The contemporaries of the Cherokee people are not the students of WCU, past or present—as they were supposedly gone before the establishment of the university:

And long after the Cherokee were gone, another rare sprig came to Cullowhee when a small, struggling school began in 1889. That budding of an educational seed was eighty-five years ago this fall (para. 2)

In the context of the above paragraphs, the student-author implies that many, many years have passed between the occupation of the ancient Cherokee and the founding of the school in 1889. However, the Cherokee did not legally relinquish this specific parcel of land until the 1819 Treaty of Washington and the majority of Cherokee people residing in the area hadn't undergone forced removal until adoption of The Treaty of Echota (1838-39). Additionally, 1889 is the year the Cherokee were officially recognized as a tribe by the state of NC, which is the same year the school was founded. Thus, the school and the Cherokee are contemporaries at the time of its founding, the Cherokee aren't just the school's ancestors, like the narrative of *Ancient Peoples* suggests.

Settler Colonial Strings Attached: The Ties that Bind

As a “structuring structure,” settler colonialism “creates a foundation of violence (white supremacy, racism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy)” upon which settler-colonials rely on to maintain literal and figurative relations of power, conquest, colonialism and capitalism (Stein 2017; Rocha Beardall 2022). Settler colonials in power focus on creating social institutions or racialized organizations that normalize settlement, Indigenous exploitation, and predatory accumulation; one such institution is the US higher education system where “settler interests are rehearsed, take meaning, and are acted upon” by the student body being socialized (Rocha Beardall 2022). As students are instructed on and internalize these norms and values, they begin to engage in “colonizer discourse” or narratives used to maintain their sense of identity in relation to American Indians; negative stereotypes—often rooted in the colonial period of the US—are highly active in shaping individual narratives about American Indians that help justify the norms and values students are socialized into (Fitzgerald 2014; Strong 2013). In the case of university campuses with strong, documented geographical connections to specific American Indian nations, these settler colonial narratives begin to be connected to the campus landscape—ultimately allowing students who “figuratively own the landscape around them” a greater capacity to cultivate and engage with settler colonial narratives. Through these narratives, students can selectively remember events and express their collective identity as both related to, distinct from, and dominant to the American Indian group in question.

At WCU, this process of identity formation is demonstrated through the use of settler colonial narratives in articles published by their student newspaper; that is, representations found

in the student articles demonstrate how students cultivate and engage with settler colonial narratives when discussing the Cherokee Nation, in order to maintain the settler colonial heritage rooted within their collective identity as students of WCU. Through these narratives, students can selectively remember events and express their collective identity as both related to, distinct from, and dominant to the Cherokee people and subsequently, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Each time a narrative is engaged with by student-authors, it becomes another tie to hold together their student identity—another tie between the university and the Cherokee; the students and the university; the students to the Cherokee. These ties that bind become the foundation for “the only heritage Cullowhee has” (7/9/1970).

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Students at Western Carolina University use the narratives of *Ancient Peoples, Exoticism and Romanticism*, and the duality of *Civilized and Uncivilized Peoples* to selectively remember events and express their collective identity as related to, distinct from, and dominant to the Cherokee people. Throughout the articles pulled for this thesis, the students of WCU discuss the Cherokee through their own settler colonial lens, creating a one-dimensional representation that does not accurately reflect the EBCI's position as a sovereign nation with distinct historical and political relationships to the settler state (Logan 2019). This one-dimensional representation serves its purpose in delineating the symbolic boundaries of student identity, and in doing so, fits into a much larger settler colonial discourse of claiming American Indian ancestry or using connections to American Indian nations as a way of establishing identity distinctions: in the colonial era, white settlers “appropriated indigenous symbols, attributes and skills” to establish a collective identity outside of Britain and declare natural dominion over the land in the colonies (Glenn 2015); in the antebellum era, white southerners might claim Indigenous roots as part of a rhetorical defense of slavery—integral to their own group formation—in opposition to what they saw as an overreach and incursion from federal government and the North into their lives (Logan 2019).

Contemporary Americans may claim a “genetic” or ancestral connection to American Indians in order to distance themselves from the history of white supremacy in this country (Logan 2019). As Circe Strum argues in her book *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity*, “I believe that there is a retreat from white guilt that is happening here... Whiteness is responsible for indigenous dispossession and the lack of societal connection that characterizes modernity... Indianness [is associated] with a set of values and a feeling of community belonging that is “the near opposite of the anomic individualism ... associated with the modern condition of whiteness” (as quoted in Daniels 2018). Thus, American Indian ancestry claims may also serve to “stabilize” or “shore up” whiteness as an identity (Logan 2019).

Similar to how individuals may use their ancestry lines to strengthen their ties to a familial collective identity, I argue that students use WCU's “ancestral” connection to the Cherokee people to create ties between themselves and the Cherokee. This ancestral connection justifies the creation of symbolic group identity boundaries dependent on their interpretation of Cherokee history and culture—allowing them to recreate and discuss representations of the Cherokee like one would tell stories from their family heritage. As stated before, the production of collective identity is a fluid process that relies on the consistent articulation of the symbolic boundaries between us and them, as boundaries are selectively remembered to fit the current needs of the group. In selectively remembering (and articulating) the symbolic boundaries of their identity, students attempt to balance the goals of settler colonialism with the promotion of multicultural inclusion and diversity efforts. This may have two paradoxical effects on their collective group identity, as settler colonial narratives are being used to justify their possession of Cherokee land (or dominance over the Cherokee people) while these connections

simultaneously aid in the “appropriation of a more “authentic” racial self, or of a “less bad” kind of whiteness (Logan 2019). As Sturm states, “Claiming an indigenous identity, however flimsy the evidence, relieves some of the discomfort of being a white settler” (quoted in Daniels 2018).

Stretching Settler Colonial Strings: The Wider Implications of the Study

The university is a socializing agent founded upon settler colonial interests and values; as part of their identity formation process, students incorporate these values into part of their collective identity. Within the setting of WCU, those narratives and the stereotyped “knowledge” of the Cherokee people that they contain are taken possession of by a particular group of people (the students) to become part of their own group identity. The mindsets that students take away from colleges and universities are much more than just academic knowledge; those mindsets have considerable cultural impact over the course of their lives and the information they choose to explicitly or unknowingly implicitly share with others.

In the case of WCU, much work has been done to cultivate a relationship with the EBCI and to begin to represent this relationship in a contemporary and positive light. However, many outside communities are unaware of the activities of campus administration as it is often a geographically stagnant entity; rather, they rely on students to be ambassadors of a university’s identity and showcase identity boundaries to them. Any action that is to go beyond merely effecting positive change in the relationship between WCU as a formal institution and the EBCI, but that will also spread awareness of that change off-campus, must rely upon students to fully complete it. Without the full participation of students, settler-colonial narratives as symbolic boundaries will continue to be passed on among members of the student body; as they graduate and become geographically distant from campus, they will teach these boundaries to outside communities—coloring their understanding of WCU.

In this thesis, I examined the expression and development of settler-colonial narratives by students within a campus setting, and though WCU holds a unique position, is not the only US university founded upon American Indian land. It is one of many PWIs (Primarily White Institutions) with a strong affinity for certain American Indian nations—whether geographically real or culturally perceived to be real. Many of these PWIs may also share a similar student collective identity formation process, demonstrating the possibility that these campus settings have particular significance as sites where such settler colonial narratives are shared and reinforced among a large number young adults. If the identity formation process of WCU students reflects a broader trend found in other universities, it is vital to explore how these expressions may differ and their role in shaping or perpetuating settler colonial narratives across generations and geographies.

Loose Ends: Limitations of the Study and its Findings

I acknowledge that there are many limitations to this study, which I hope to find some way to address in the future. Western Carolina University is a small public university located in North Carolina; its occupation of a named Cherokee town and contemporary relationship with

the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians puts WCU in a unique position that quite possibly is not replicated anywhere else in the US. Many of the universities with direct ties to American Indian tribes come out of the land-grant period, whereas WCU does not. The limited timespan and sampling technique undoubtedly missed important and relevant articles that could have either further supported or opposed the conclusions I've theorized; had time and resources allowed, locating and using all articles referring to the Cherokee or to Indians in the 1924-1974 period would have been ideal, rather than taking a sample of such articles. Future avenues of research could address some of these issues: returning to the database of articles to expand the amount in the final dataset as well as expand the time period it covers; attempting to find universities in similar positions to compare and contrast them.

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Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 1. Abbreviated Timeline of Western Carolina University and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians History

1540: Spaniards under Hernando De Soto explored the southwest; they reported seeing densely populated regions with many towns. Although the Cherokee are explicitly not referenced, he seems to have explored in Cherokee country, and it is a popular theory that he and his companions encountered them. This theory is discussed and accepted in some university newspaper articles from *The Western Carolinian* (Anon, 1960; Conley 2005).

1673: Cherokee country is found to be covering all or parts of VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, AL, TN and KY. (Conley 2005)

1817: Treaty of July 8, 1817 forced the Cherokee to cede land in TN, AL, and GA in exchange for land bordering the Osage Nation in the West. It also offered to give parcels to individuals who wished to remain in the East on privately-owned land and thus remove themselves from the Cherokee Nation. (Conley 2005)

1819: Treaty of Washington forced the Cherokee to give up almost all land remaining in the East (including NC, SC, VA, WV, TN, KY, GA, and AL). (Bird, Conley 2005)

1819: Treaty of Washington gives NC Cherokee land which is split into districts. The Cullowhee settlement—previously illegally squatting—is labeled as district seven and purchased by several individuals. The most notable of whom is John Bryson and David Rogers, who eventually sell and donate land to form Cullowhee High School. Before this, primary school is held in the townhouse of the Rogers family (Bird 1963).

1820: Quallatown is established through connecting private lands and is separate from the Cherokee Nation. It is located less than 20 miles away from the settlement of Painter, later known as Cullowhee. Members of Quallatown are not required to follow the Treaty of Echota, nor any other removal efforts due to their status as non-tribal members.

1838-39: Treaty of Echota is established, forcing the military removal of the Cherokee and beginning the Trail of Tears. Quallatown accepts refugees who hid in the mountains until the US Army left the area, as well as those who walked back from Oklahoma after the removal (Conley 2005).

1850: Membership of Quallatown numbers nearly a thousand people.

1884: Quallatown hires a primary teacher named William Atley Long, who brings along Robert Lee Madison as an assistant (Bird 1963).

1889: Quallatown gains North Carolina legal recognition, and becomes the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). All current members of the band are descended from original members of Quallatown, and the refugees they accepted.

1889: Cullowhee Academy or Cullowhee High School is founded, and the principal is named Thomas C. Buchanan for one year. Robert Lee Madison became principal and later president from 1889 to 1912 (Bird 1963).

Table 2. Frequency distribution of articles collected in original data gathering in both the archives and retained data from capstone, by year of appearance in *The Western Carolinian*, 1924-1994

| <u>Publication year</u> | <u>Number of articles</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1924 | 14 |
| 1930 | 1 |
| 1933 | 1 |
| 1934 | 1 |
| 1938 | 1 |
| 1939 | 1 |
| 1944 | 1 |
| 1945 | 1 |
| 1950 | 2 |
| 1953 | 1 |
| 1954 | 1 |
| 1957 | 1 |
| 1960 | 1 |
| 1961 | 1 |
| 1962 | 2 |
| 1963 | 1 |
| 1964 | 3 |
| 1965 | 2 |
| 1967 | 1 |
| 1968 | 1 |
| 1969 | 4 |
| 1970 | 1 |
| 1974 | 18 |
| 1984 | 6 |
| 1994 | 10 |
| n | 77 |

Note: The total shown is the total of all articles before exclusionary criteria was applied as described in CH 3: Methods. All articles identified for analysis from *The Western Carolinian* (i.e., containing a form of the keyword “Indian” or “Cherokee”) in which at least one of this study’s themes occurs. Years sampled are all years ending in “4,” or every tenth calendar year beginning in 1924 and ending in 1994, as well as years of the newspaper from which were taken articles from a previous study as described in the text.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of articles analyzed in final dataset (after applying exclusionary criteria), by year of appearance in *The Western Carolinian*, 1924-1974

| <u>Publication year</u> | <u>Number of articles</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1924 | 5 |
| 1930 | 1 |
| 1934 | 1 |
| 1939 | 1 |
| 1945 | 1 |
| 1953 | 1 |
| 1957 | 1 |
| 1960 | 1 |
| 1963 | 1 |
| 1964 | 2 |
| 1965 | 1 |
| 1967 | 1 |
| 1970 | 1 |
| 1974 | 7 |
| n | 25 |

Note: The total shown is the total of all articles included in the analysis in this thesis, which is the subset of all articles identified for analysis from *The Western Carolinian* (i.e., containing a form of the keyword “Indian” or “Cherokee”) in which at least one of this study’s themes occurs. Years sampled are all years ending in “4,” or every tenth calendar year beginning in 1924, as well as years of the newspaper from which were taken articles from a previous study as described in the text.

Table 4. List of codes developed in the analysis process but left unused in this thesis

- Brave Warrior: A strong, silent, brave man committed to warfare, hunting, and the protection of his people. This trope portrays American Indian tribes as preoccupied with warfare and savagery, obscuring their day-to-day existence and community building.
- Cherokee Artifact Removal: Mention of finding Cherokee artifacts on campus and the connection of the Cherokee to this place. Specifically, the stealing, collecting or otherwise use of artifacts by the community or university
- De Soto/White Indians: usage of De Soto in text, typically in reference to the first contact Cherokee had with white people/colonialists/Europeans. Often taken as fact, but not verifiably proven that I can see. It also refers to the concept that SCs are obsessed with finding white lineage to the land or fabricating an encounter with white culture that advanced the Indians all in an effort to gain greater connection to, and thus ownership of, the land they now possess.
- Gov. Funding: Semi-contemporary belief that Native people receive welfare or funds based on their Native status (or minority status) from both their own gov. and the federal gov. Typically implies that Native peoples are undeserving of these funds and that they do not use them wisely.
 - *(child code) Gambling Funds*: based on the same beliefs, this idea includes referring to gambling/casinos and the expectation that tribes are made rich by ownership of casinos, and thus, all their people should be wealthy too.
- Historical Reporting: the reporting of local or regional history, usually tied to the Cherokee in some way
- Known Author: Author of the article is named in byline or within the text
 - Non-Student Author: Author is identified as being outside of the student body, i.e., a professor
- Noble Savage: The “noble savage” is a nonwhite, Indigenous, and exotic figure with savage or beastlike tendencies unspoiled by the trappings of modernity and one with nature (Hughey 2014).
- Peaceful/Good Indians: Depiction of the Cherokee as peaceful, harmless, and otherwise in tune with nature or an easier way of life.
- Progress of an Idea: Western Carolina Teachers College was originally founded to teach students how to become school teachers. The closest formal teaching education was hours away, near the middle of the state. Thus, WCTC was created to fulfill this gap in educational needs. This original purpose became the legacy of WCU, and informed its vision of itself as the struggling school that flourished against the odds, the underdog of their own story. They believe that as an institution, they must continue to fulfill this original purpose, in sharing educational opportunities across the region (and nationally through summer scholar programs). The book on the history of WCU has this line in the

subtitle, essentially it means that the simple idea that local/regional people deserved quality education evolved into the larger, more complex concept that changes with the needs of the time—that the idea/mission has progressed.

- R—(s): Direct use of the term R—s, considered a slur against American Indians; use is not dependent upon spelling or pluralization.
- Red Man: Direct use of the term red man, whether spelled Red Man, red men, or some other combination.
- Campus Construction: reporting on the changing landscape of campus, especially the construction of new facilities

Table 5. Frequency distribution of articles in *The Western Carolinian* coded with each theme, 1924-1974 (n of articles = 25)

| Theme | Number of articles where theme occurs |
|---|--|
| Exoticism and romanticism | 25 |
| Ancient peoples | 19 |
| Uncivilized and civilized peoples duality | 9 |

Note: The total of all frequencies above is greater than n of articles, since a given article may include more than one theme. The articles represented here are all the articles included in the analysis in this thesis, which is the subset of all articles identified for analysis from *The Western Carolinian* (i.e., containing a form of the word “Indian” or “Cherokee”) in which at least one of this study’s themes occurs.

Table 6. Frequency distribution of the occurrence of themes organized by the article in which the theme is found in *The Western Carolinian*

| Date | Title | Exoticism and Romanticism | Ancient Peoples | Uncivilized and Civilized Peoples Duality |
|------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 03/1924 | LEADING CHARACTERS IN HISTORY OF CULLOWHEE | 5 | 10 | 12 |
| 05/1924 | CLIMATE AND RECREATION | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 07/1924 | FROM CULLOWHEE TO CHEROKEE | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 07/1924 | SOCIAL ACTIVITIES | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 10/1924 | Normal School Enjoys Cherokee Indian Fair | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 03/15/1930 | THE INDIAN MOUND: IT LOOKS PROSAIC BUT IT HAS SEEN ROMANCE | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| 2/1/1934 | TEACHERS COLLEGE OWNS INTERESTING COLLECTION | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 5/13/1939 | Today's Motorists Follow Old Trails Made By [R—s]: First Palefaces Followed Paths Worn by Indians On Hunt For Game | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| 11/7/1945 | Jackson County Once The Heart Of Cherokee Territory | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| 10/17/1953 | A Great Day in W C's History | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 9/16/1957 | Western Carolina College Has Many Traditions | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 9/16/1960 | Evidence Shows De Soto May Have Visited Cullowhee | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| 11/1/1963 | On Campus | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 2/28/1964 | Dillsboro Pocket Of Tradition | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| 10/16/1964 | Cullowhee Valley Retains Signs of Indian Heritage | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| 2/5/1965 | Indian Graves Exposed | 3 | 10 | 0 |
| 6/22/1967 | Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| 7/9/1970 | Street names are irrelevant | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 1/31/1974 | Archives Has Something For You | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| 4/23/1974 | Five new degrees expand offerings | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6/27/1974 | Carolinian News Briefs | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 7/5/1974 | Superior students' program begins 16th year at WCU | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 10/24/1974 | Pageant to depict history of Western | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 10/24/1974 | Robinson to take post Saturday | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 11/19/1974 | History Indicates respect of Cherokee Woman's Role | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 72 | 68 | 18 |

Note: The frequencies above do not indicate a standardized excerpt length for each occurrence of a theme. Rather, it is referring to an imperfect measurement of the “amount” of fully-formed thoughts that indicate one of narratives occurs, whether that thought is a sentence or a paragraph long. The articles represented here are all the articles included in the analysis in this thesis, which is the subset of all articles identified for analysis from *The Western Carolinian* (i.e., containing a form of the word “Indian” or “Cherokee”) in which at least one of this study’s themes occurs.

Figure 1. Statement from Cultural Internal Review Board of The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)

**STATEMENT FROM CULTURAL INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD OF THE
EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS**

January 18, 2012

Things to Consider

before proposing a research project on the Qualla Boundary:

Before initiating a research project on the Qualla Boundary, please be mindful that it needs to be performed with an attitude of respect toward the community. It must come from a sense of integrity due to the community and its members regarding their lives and history. Not all inquiry is unwelcomed, only that which disregards the following guidelines.

The EBCI Cultural Research Committee does not accept any research projects dealing with traditional medicine or religious practices. Such information is not deemed appropriate for dissemination outside of the tribe.

Acquisition of traditional knowledge is not considered a right, but a privilege. An attitude of entitlement will not benefit a researcher and may appear to constitute exploitation.

Are you providing a desired service? The Cherokee concept of *duyuktai* is about balance. Any research project requires the taking of informant's time, knowledge, and experience. It is imperative that the researcher's project is of benefit not only to the informant, but to the tribe as a whole.

Few tribal members are impressed by titles or degrees. Tribal members will judge a researcher on their character, and especially their motives for conducting research.

The success of any research conducted with tribal members is dependant on the relationships built with people within the community. Please keep in mind that some tribal members are not receptive to any form of research or researchers.

Figure 2. University Title Changes

1888-1891: Cullowhee Academy

1891-1905: Cullowhee High School

1905-1925: Cullowhee Normal and Industrial School

1925-1929: Cullowhee State Normal School

1929-1953: Western Carolina Teachers College

1953-1967: Western Carolina College

1967- : Western Carolina University

Appendix B: Detailed List of Newspaper Article References

Date: Title of article:

- 03/1924 LEADING CHARACTERS IN HISTORY OF CULLOWHEE
writ. Berta Wells (H.S. '25)
- 05/1924 CLIMATE AND RECREATION
- 07/1924 FROM CULLOWHEE TO CHEROKEE
writ. Herman Oliver
- 07/1924 SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
- 10/1924 Normal School Enjoys Cherokee Indian Fair
- 3/15/1930 THE INDIAN MOUND: IT LOOKS PROSAIC BUT IT HAS SEEN ROMANCE
- 2/1/1934 TEACHERS COLLEGE OWNS INTERESTING COLLECTION
- 5/13/1939 Today's Motorists Follow Old Trails Made By Redskins: First Palefaces Followed
Paths Worn by Indians On Hunt For Game *writ. Roy Cowan*
- 11/7/1945 Jackson County Once The Heart Of Cherokee Territory
- 10/17/1953 A Great Day in W C's History
- 9/16/1957 Western Carolina College Has Many Traditions
writ. Mrs. Lillian Hirt
- 9/16/1960 Evidence Shows De Soto May Have Visited Cullowhee
(*Reprinted from "Regional Sketches of Western North Carolina," a bi-monthly
magazine published by WCTC, December 1937, Vol. XIV, No. 6.*)
- 11/1/1963 On Campus
writ. Robbyn Morrow
- 2/28/1964 Dillsboro Pocket Of Tradition
writ. Charles Stephens
- 10/16/1964 Cullowhee Valley Retains Signs of Indian Heritage
writ. Marc Latour
- 2/5/1965 Indian Graves Exposed
writ. Lillian Hirt
- 6/22/1967 Cullowhee Rich in Indian Lore
- 7/9/1970 Street names are irrelevant
- 1/31/1974 Archives Has Something For You
writ. Tom Jones
- 4/23/1974 Five new degrees expand offerings
- 6/27/1974 Carolinian News Briefs
- 7/5/1974 Superior students' program begins 16th year at WCU
- 10/24/1974 Pagent to depict history of Western
- 10/24/1974 Robinson to take post Saturday
- 11/19/1974 History Indicates respect of Cherokee Woman's Role
writ. Shirley U. Geste