“STICK-TO-ITTY”: USING ORAL LIFE HISTORIES IN PRINCEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF PRIDE, EMOTIONS, AND RESILIENCE IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANES FLOYD AND MATTHEW

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses oral life histories conducted in Princeville, North Carolina, the oldest town chartered by Freed Blacks in the United States, to discuss community-engaged research and outreach, as well as resilience, in post-disaster context. Through oral life history interviews, we collected the experiences of Princeville residents with Hurricanes Floyd (1999) and Matthew (2016). Analysis of interview data revealed themes of pride, emotions, and resilience in the aftermath of devastation brought by historic floods. Drawing on anthropological, sociological, and historical methods, this thesis discusses these themes while exploring how connection to place, community resilience, and the lack of representation in the historical narrative of the United States play roles in a town’s decision to rebuild or relocate.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Princeville, North Carolina, the oldest town chartered by freed Blacks in America, faced devastation after Hurricanes Floyd (1999) and Matthew (2016). With the immense damages and displacement of the community came an increased interest in resilience, flood risk and management, and the history of the town. The Voices of Princeville project originally sought to research and gain better understanding of community resilience in the historic community, using oral life histories as the primary research method.

The Voices of Princeville project was created by Dr. Cynthia Grace-McCaskey, an anthropologist from East Carolina University (ECU), working in collaboration with the Engagement Outreach Scholars Academy (EOSA) at ECU. It was then that I joined the project as a graduate research assistant, working closely with Dr. Grace-McCaskey in the implementation, development, and management of the project. Three undergraduate students from the ECU Honors College joined the project in the Fall semester of 2019 to meet their requirements for service, research, and community outreach. All members of the research team participated by conducting interviews, but the interviews were transcribed and analyzed by me specifically for this thesis.

Overall, the intention of the project was to use oral life histories of Princeville residents who had lived through one, or both, of the historic storms, examining their experiences, their views on resiliency, and what the future of their town looks like. Resilience, depending on the level of analysis being conducted in a project, can be defined differently. For this project, community resilience is the ability to prepare for anticipated hazards, adapting to changing conditions, and to withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions (Materese, 2021). Conducting

these interviews in the Princeville temporary town offices in Tarboro, North Carolina, the research team found that participants have a variety of perceptions of the community's resilience.

Princeville, despite its historical significance, has often been left out of the historical narrative, causing people to remain unaware of the town's importance in United States history. Calvin Adkins (2021), a Princeville historian and community member, writes about how the story of the town was silenced, in part by floods taking away recorded evidence, but more so the history of slavery and post-slavery racist culture, a process described by Pierre Bourdieu as "misrecognition." By this, he is referring to how the history of Princeville was purposely left out of the historical narrative by those who have the power to shape and publicize the historical narrative (Adkins, 2021). It was not until 1999, when the catastrophic floods from Hurricane Floyd devastated Princeville, that the town received national attention. However, even then, it was tragedy that people were interested in, not the town's unique history. To reaffirm the town's history, and to make it better known by people from Princeville and beyond, the story of the town, not just of the floods, must be rejuvenated, bringing with it the recognition Princeville deserves.

This thesis utilizes oral life histories to examine the utility of this method in post disaster contexts. To illustrate how this method can be implemented in real world settings, the Voices of Princeville project will be used as a case study for not only the methodology of oral life histories, but their immense impact in the understanding, outreach, and education of small historic towns that have often been left out of historical narratives. This research was conducted in collaboration with the town manager and citizens and focuses on the town's resilience in the face of historical floods brought on by Hurricanes Floyd (1999) and Matthew (2016). As such, this

project offers an excellent opportunity to illustrate the use, methods, implementation, and impact of oral life histories.

Drawing primarily from literature in sociology, anthropology, and history, this thesis explores how the collection of oral life histories provides researchers insight that other methods do not, by giving researchers a qualitative look at the actual experiences of those being interviewed, using their exact phrasing, tones, and retellings. Looking at literature surrounding anthropological perspectives of resilience and connection to place, this thesis contributes to the understanding of why people stay in regions faced with disasters, and what factors contribute to their reasons to stay and their ideas of resilience. Using an existing data set, I worked backwards to create research objectives for this thesis.

Data collection spanned from October 2019 to May 2020, with a total of seven oral histories. This comparatively low number of interviews is a direct result of the 2019-2020 Coronavirus pandemic which resulted in statewide closures, stay-at-home orders, and little to no access to Princeville community members. Narrative analysis was conducted on the seven interviews, which were all digitally recorded and transcribed, using key-words-in-context to explore three central themes: pride, emotions, and resilience.

The future of Princeville is one of commitment, community, and revitalization. After Hurricane Matthew, state reparations helped the town purchase 53- and 81-acre land parcels on which the town plans to rebuild essential buildings and community resources. Additionally, in 2020, the town received $40 million in mixed state and federal funding to upgrade the levee and elevate highways (Grace-McCaskey et al. 2021). Rebuilding within the original Princeville town limits means planning for future floods, and requires designing flood-proof structures, which sometimes includes lifting homes and other buildings several feet above their current

foundations, so that when it floods again, water will not enter the structure. Decisions at the community and state level are still being made regarding Princeville's future, but one thing is certain: residents will do whatever is necessary to ensure that Princeville remains at its current location.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives that guide this thesis are as follows:

- To explain what oral life histories are and how they can be used to examine community resilience in post-disaster (e.g., floods) contexts;
- To discuss community outreach and engagement through the use of oral life histories;
- To show how oral life histories, when used in close collaboration with a community, can shed light on information not expressly sought by the researcher(s).

In Chapter Two, background about Princeville is provided, as well as information about Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew. Literature regarding oral life histories and public outreach and engagement is explored, relating back to the thesis objectives. Chapter Three discusses the data collection methodologies utilized by the research team, as well as the data analyses I independently conducted for this thesis. Chapter Four discusses the data in terms of three major themes (pride, resilience, and emotions) with discussion about how each theme relates back to the research objectives. Lastly, Chapter Five, the conclusion, summarizes the project as a whole, highlighting challenges faced while conducting the research and future directions.

CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this section, I will provide background information about Princeville, North Carolina, describing the historical, geographical, and social contexts of the town. A variety of data about Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew will be provided, specifically rainfall, windspeed, dates of landfall and movement patterns with respect to their impacts on Princeville and the greater Eastern North Carolina region. Additionally, this section contains relevant literature regarding public outreach and oral life histories. This chapter aims to show the reader the importance of Princeville, the use of oral life histories, and the importance of working collaboratively with communities towards academic and scientific endeavors.

Princeville, North Carolina

Founded in 1865 as Freedom Hill, Princeville was officially chartered in 1885, making it the oldest town chartered by freed Blacks in America (Mobley, 1986). Named after a prominent carpenter in the town, Turner Prince, Princeville remains predominantly African American. The history of Princeville is one of dedication, perseverance, and pride. In 1865, while the Civil War was wreaking havoc across the United States, Union troops were stationed just outside of Tarboro, North Carolina (another town within Edgecombe County). The still enslaved African Americans of the region saw this encampment as an opportunity for potential freedom, moving into the encampment with the promise of union protection. At the end of the Civil War, two white planters who owned the newly occupied land made no attempt to evict those who had made their claim, likely due to the land's history of flooding (Mobley, 1986). It was at this time that the name "Freedom Hill" was established. This name came from the hill where a union soldier stood, announcing the Emancipation Proclamation to the now free people of the town.

It was not until Earl Ijames, a curator at the North Carolina Museum of History, found evidence that Princeville was chartered in 1885 that the town was recognized as the oldest town chartered by freed Blacks (Adkins, 2021). Before this, the title belonged to Eatonville, Florida. Eatonville was chartered in 1887, and until recently was displayed in Washington, DC at the National Museum of African American History and Culture as the historic location.

Located in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Princeville lies in the flood plain of the Tar River. This proximity to the Tar River proved dangerous in 1999 when Hurricane Floyd caused record breaking flood levels, bringing devastation to Princeville. It was not until this storm that the town received national attention. Despite having such an important foothold in history, Princeville is often unknown to the public. Adkins (2021) describes Princeville as a major piece of history that is left out of the historical consciousness of most people, including members of the community itself. Reasons suggested for this lapse, and utter discrimination, in historical knowledge and representation range from Edgecombe county's overall celebration of the Jim Crow version of the Civil War, to lack of education at the local and state level. It was not until the catastrophic outcome of Hurricane Floyd that many members of the community began to learn, appreciate, and spread knowledge of their historic town.

After Floyd, the town rejected an offer from the Federal Emergency Management Administration's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to buyout many residential homes and properties. Instead, many townspeople decided to stay, opting to rebuild. Even though they were assured that Hurricane Floyd was a "storm of the century," the residents of Princeville were struck again by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. This storm brought with it substantial rainfall, once again flooding the rural town. The residents decided to endure the damages and remain in the town. This resiliency has been a topic of interest for many

researchers from a plethora of fields, increasing the town's representation and academic acknowledgment.

Princeville was picked because of its historical significance, its history with floods, and its lack of representation in the historical narrative. This project in Princeville is one of the first of its kind, as there can be no other town that can claim being the first town chartered by freed Blacks in America. Its historic significance cannot be ignored when conducting research within the community. The connection to place, familial ties, and sense of loyalty and pride must be considered when working within the community.

As "outsiders" coming into the town, the research team relied heavily on community partnerships and engagement to gain not only access to the townspeople, but their trust. This close-knit collaboration leads to a deeper understanding between researchers and their subjects, aiding in our interpretation and re-telling of their stories.

The people of Princeville have a unique experience that deserves to be recorded, retold, and displayed for the public. It is a goal of this project to create open access files for Princeville residents and visitors alike to listen to the harrowing histories told by those we interviewed.

Hurricane Floyd: 1999

September 16, 1999, category two Hurricane Floyd made landfall near Cape Fear, North Carolina (Atallah and Bosart, 2003). With sustained winds up to fifty miles per hour, meteorologist and emergency weather broadcasters assumed that the possibility for wind damage was the most concerning aspect of the storm. Moving north from Cape Fear, Floyd brought over 19 inches (50cm) of rain to most portions of Eastern North Carolina (Atallah and Bosart, 2003) over a 24-hour period (Herring, 2000). Coming just after Hurricane Dennis, a Hurricane that

battered the region for nine days bringing over six inches of rain (Herring, 2000), the added precipitation caused devastating floods throughout the region.

The heavy rains caused the Tar River to crest as high as 42 feet, and Princeville was decimated by the rising flood waters (Hurricane Matthew, 2021). With the river cresting this high, the levee, an embarkment that was built from natural materials (dirt, sand, grass, etc.) to protect the town from the Tar River, failed. The flooding of Princeville, and other towns across North Carolina, caused the evacuations of thousands, leaving many homeless. Causing an estimated $1.3 billion in damages (Herring, 2000), federal agencies like FEMA and the National Guard offered support and rescue to many who had been left stranded in the flood waters of Floyd. Described as a "500-year flood" by hydrologists (Herring, 2000), many people believed that flooding of this magnitude would not happen again.

Hurricane Matthew, 2016

Seventeen years later, on October 8, 2016 Hurricane Matthew made landfall in North Carolina, bringing with it approximately 14 inches of rain in Edgecombe County (Hurricane Matthew, 2021), causing the Tar River to crest at over 36 feet, just six inches lower than Hurricane Floyd. Once again, the town of Princeville, and Edgecombe county, experienced devastating floods, causing an estimated $50 million in damages to personal residences, $25 million in damages to non-residential structures and $33 million in crop loss (Hurricane Matthew, 2021). With 3,500 structures in the county being declared damaged, the people of Princeville were forced to evacuate, leaving many homeless. There are still many people from Princeville who remain displaced from this storm, over four years later.

Oral Life Histories

Oral life histories can be defined as, "collecting memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews" (Ritchie 2014: 1). Sometimes critiqued for relying too heavily on an individual's ability to remember, retell, and accurately describe events (Grele et al. 2018), oral life histories differ from structured interviews because they are open ended and seek to record the participants' experiences and history as a whole (Dunaway, 1992). Another major difference between life histories and traditional interviews is that oral life histories often focus on a particular historic event being researched, separating them from other forms of social science interviews (Iorio, 2014). Allowing time to pass between the event and the interview itself is crucial for oral life histories, as this "spacing out" allows those whose experiences are being collected to reflect, process, and interpret the event itself (Iorio, 2014). A major advantage to using oral life histories is the opportunity to "fill in gaps left by reporting norms of the time or history written from the perspective of the dominant social groups" (Iorio, 2014: 187). This advantage is clear when working in communities often left out of the historic narrative, like Princeville, North Carolina.

Using methods from a variety of social sciences, including sociology, anthropology and psychology, oral life histories provide researchers a unique and immersive opportunity to collect qualitative data directly from the source. As all the interviews are recorded, the participants' exact words, phrases, and euphemisms can be used in data analysis, interpretation, and presentation. When combined with public outreach project initiatives, oral life histories can be a powerful tool in the research and understanding of groups previously deemed as "other," because their experiences are being analyzed and understood through their own words.

Oral life histories are part of an ethnographer's tool kit, used to capture the human experience in its most genuine form (Dunaway, 1992). Using an interview process to collect and preserve diverse perspectives and narratives has shown, throughout history, to benefit the recording, research, and understanding of humankind. Taking a participant through chronological life events, or life histories, anthropologists and social science researchers alike can procure biographies of individuals from a diverse set of circumstances, cultures, and experiences (Dunaway, 1992). These biographies can manifest as museum exhibits, audio/video presentations, literature, and presentations. Oral life histories allow access to the lives of the participants like no other ethnographic field method and should be considered crucial when conducting anthropological field work. One drawback of using oral life histories as a method is the reliance placed on an individual's ability to recall and retell the event (Ritchie, 2014).

Sloan (2008) conducted oral life histories in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which made direct landfall with Mississippi on August 29, 2005. This storm brought with it deadly sustained winds up to 120 miles per hours, resulting in 49 of Mississippi's 82 counties being declared disaster areas (Sloan, 2008). Many historians and social scientists recognized this disastrous event as an opportunity to conduct oral life histories, aiming to better understand the experiences of those who lived through the deadly storm (Sloan, 2008). Sloan (2008) describes these community interactions as "working between tragedy and memory," as the subject was still at the forefront of the memory of those interviewed. Described by Sloan (2008) as an invasive exercise while people were attempting to rebuild their lives, he still found many members of the community who were willing to be interviewed and tell their stories. Through these interviews, members of the communities most directly impacted by the storm were able to share their experiences. Often, they stated they were not prepared for Hurricane Katrina, despite previously

experiencing Hurricane Camile, a category five hurricane that struck Mississippi in 1969 (Sloan, 2008). This insight helped individuals and communities better prepare and plan for future hurricanes and disasters. Sloan argued that, "the voice of those who experienced the storm are central to gaining any understanding of the true impact of Hurricane Katrina" (Sloan, 2008: 179). It is in this framework that the work in Princeville finds its importance. Collecting the oral life histories of those who were most directly impacted by Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew provides direct insight into their experiences, perceptions, and realities.

Resilience in the wake of disaster in regions throughout the world have been studied, seeking to understand the human experiences, and ideas of resilience. Malik and Hashmi (2020) used ethnographic methods to study and seek a better understanding of the floods experienced in the North West Himalayas, focusing on the catastrophic flood of 2014. In this flood, the lives of those in the Kashmir Valley were deeply impacted in all ways, resulting in the deaths of 277 individuals (Malik and Hashmi, 2020). Although there were multiple floods from 2014 to 2019, none were as devastating as the 2014 flood.

Through surveys, interviews, and participant observations of total of 1100 families throughout the region, the researchers went deep into "understanding the narratives of people," seeking a better understanding of their experiences with the floods, their histories, their cultures, their meanings of belonging and community (Malik and Hashmi, 2020: 4). Drawing on oral narratives, this "grassroots information" provided insight into the differential vulnerability to flooding based on social class. Their analysis revealed specific narrative themes, which converged in relation to the floods and the participants' experiences. These themes were not obvious to researchers from outside of the region, and only became clear through the direct interaction with and collection of the narratives of those who experienced the floods. The results

from the analysis of the oral histories from Princeville residents, presented in chapter three, builds on these findings, exploring whether outsiders (i.e., researchers who are not from Princeville) will have the same conceptions or understandings of resilience.

Community and individual resilience are broadly discussed in anthropological literature as ways to describe the qualities and capacities that enable a community to recover from a catastrophic event (Barrios, 2016). With four primary adaptive capacities (economic development, social capitol, information and communication, and community competence), community resilience does not come from an individual's ability to adapt and change to external situations, but rather the collective (Norris et al. 2007). Looking at the community as an entity of its own, the ways that it must change in response to disasters (such as hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes) is helpful in understanding how each of the previous capacities can be implemented (Norris et al. 2007). Communities as an entity are made up of built, social, economic, and natural environments that impact and influence one another in diverse ways (Norris et al. 2007).

Communities themselves are not static, no matter how strong of a connection to their histories is maintained (Barrios, 2016). As an entity, the community is constantly changing, especially in the aftermath of a disaster, such as a hurricane. It is then that a new community can come about, changing from its original form, and adapting to the new circumstances (Barrios, 2016). This supports the argument made by Adkins (2021) that in the face of catastrophe brought by Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew, Princeville is in the process of a historical resurgence, claiming its place in the historical narrative and collective consciousness.

Minority communities, like Princeville, face added obstacles when creating more resilient communities. Research conducted on the Gullah Geechee, a descendent community of the southeastern United States argues for a new framework of community resilience to be used in

ethnic and minority communities (Ghahramani, McArdle, and Fatoric, 2020). In this research, the researchers analyzed articles written about the Gullah Geechee, focusing on identifying patterns and primary research themes in 109 publications concerning their community resilience. This proposed framework addresses the individual needs and challenges faced by the community, better ensuring a successful adaptation plan (Ghahramani, McArdle, and Fatoric, 2020). This conceptualized framework has five major pieces: conflict resolution, community attachment, community capitals preservation, community-led tourism, and community resilience (Ghahramani, McArdle, and Fatoric, 2020). Relating this framework to Princeville, some pieces are already at play, more specifically community attachment and community capitals preservation.

Community Engaged Research and Outreach

Using academic platforms for community outreach projects is the responsibility of all academics. Employing a variety of methods, social scientists must reach out to communities, working in close collaboration and partnership, if change of policy, implementation and understanding is hoped to be gained. Archaeologists Tracie Mayfield, and Scott E. Simmons (2018) support this perspective, claiming that public outreach and engagement make fieldwork more meaningful.

Community outreach and engagement is an opportunity for researchers to connect with the communities that they seek to study, bringing with it a better understanding of the challenges, livelihoods, and experiences of those being researched (Wright et al. 2020). Defined by Schwartz (2010: 1) as, “research that partners university scholarly resources with those in the public and private sectors to enrich knowledge, address and help solve critical social issues”, contributing to the public good. Working with the community is described by Wright et al. (2020) as a

collaboration between community partners and researchers, which contributes to the interests of the communities while advancing scientific knowledge. This partnership aids in understanding a community's actual concerns, leading to solutions and outcomes that the community will likely embrace. To ensure that projects are engaging with the community, partnership and collaboration must take place throughout all stages of a project, from development through the research and ending with the final product. This mixing of communities and scholarship can be considered both an endeavor to better understanding and public service (Schwartz, 2010).

When conducting community engaged research, the wants, needs and risks to the community being worked with must be considered. Mikesell (2013) describes three ethical principles to protect the rights and well-being of the research participants: individual autonomy, beneficence and nonmaleficence, and fairness (Mikesell, 2013). Individual autonomy means giving the participant(s) as much information about the research as possible (Mikesell, 2013). This could include explaining to them the purpose of the research, the process, the desired end products, and where the information will be stored/presented. It is only after the participant has been fully briefed on the study that they can make the informed decision of whether they would like to participate or not. The second principle, beneficence and nonmaleficence, concerns the potential harm that the research methods being used can cause to the participants (Mikesell, 2013). To best protect the participants, researchers must carefully consider the risk-benefit ratio of participation. Lastly, the principle of fairness, or justice, involves researchers equally distributing the risks and benefits of the research to society (Mikesell, 2013). Understanding, and implementing these three principles when conducting research within a community helps ensure that no harm is brought to the participants, that the community is kept at the forefront of

understanding and communication, and that relationships between the community itself, and the researchers, remains as intact as possible.

All three of these principles had to be considered when working in Princeville. During all steps of the research and analysis, the interests and concerns of the community were considered, allowing participants to retract anything they said, allowing open access to the interviews, and giving them the ability to decide what questions they did or did not answer. This could bias the results as this autonomy meant that not all questions were answered, and some provided details about events while others did not. On an individual level, all participants were walked through an informed consent form, and then asked to sign, after verbal confirmation. These interviews covered a traumatic topic that continues to impact those interviewed for the Voices of Princeville project, which was always something that we kept in mind, especially when conducting the interviews.

When researchers are working within a community, the partnership and collaboration with community leaders is critical. This involvement leads to an increased understanding and awareness of issues, interests, and concerns. Community engaged research and outreach is an opportunity for academics to use their positions for public service and should be carried out whenever possible, as such engagement between science and the public results in positive outcomes and better solutions (Srinivas, 2017).

A case study conducted in Berkshire, England (Puzyreva and de Vries, 2020) sought to understand flood histories and risk management through community engagement, building from an ethnographic case study. This is an excellent example of community engagement after a flooding disaster because the researchers worked directly with the community, focusing their research on the primary concerns of community members. This case study also showcases the

importance of community engagement in the creation and implementation of policy and sustainability. Faced with an increasing number of flood hazards due to climate change, Berkshire residents were interviewed using structured and semi-structured interviews, and surveys to better understand their flood histories and conceptions of flood management (Puzyreva and de Vries, 2020). This research highlighted the differences in histories between two distinct groups within the county, those most prone to floods and those who were not. They found that there were major differences in flood preparation, preparedness, and likeliness to flood between these groups, resulting in differences of their preparedness and understanding of risks (Puzyreva and de Vries, 2020).

The findings of this project aided in the creation of two-way consultation programs between the local governments and risk management professionals, considering the individual needs of the groups. This case study shows how direct engagement with a community can shed light on differences in experiences and perceptions, aiding in the creation of policy, planning and preparedness. The two distinct groups in Berkshire are like Princeville, North Carolina as the overall county (Edgecombe) experiences different floods than the small historic town of Princeville, as their proximity to the Tar River is different. This case study's use of community engagement relates to the work in Princeville because the focus was on local attitudes towards flood management and risk, working with the public who was most impacted by the floods directly. Understanding the differences in flood risk and perceptions between Princeville and the rest of Edgecombe County can only help officials create better routes of communication and plans that can be better suited the needs of each community.

Using community outreach and research projects, anthropologists have gained a better understanding of connection to place, a possible reason for why people stay in post-disaster

contexts. In anthropology, connection and relation to place is often encompassed within the concepts and concern of "belonging" (Degnen, 2015). Using ethnographic examples, Degnen (2015) posits that place attachment is not on the individual level, but is social, coming from collective ways of sharing, and the discussion and debating of memories. When seeking to understand a community's connection to place, researchers must understand that "place" itself is not a monolithic concept. Cresswell (2009) describes place as a combination made up of materials (roads, buildings, people, commodities), meaning (personal and shared histories) and practice (the everyday lives of the people). These three distinct factors are constantly interacting and influencing one another (Cresswell, 2009).

The material place of Princeville is significant, as many residents state that it is the land that no one wanted, but that their founders claimed and made their own. The geographic location of the town, linked to its propensity to flood and face destruction, is just as much part of Princeville as any town hall, school, or church that is built. The residents of Princeville heavily relate the low-lying land to their history. As shown in the interviews, residents were wary of rebuilding the town on the 53- or 81-acre land parcels, as moving the town from its original geographical location would possibly diminish the material meaning of the town.

In minority communities like Princeville, a community with a rich history that for many symbolizes freedom and pride, this connection to place is heavily impacted by the meaning of the town. Ghahramani, McArdle, and Fatoric (2020) show that emotional and empathic engagement with a place creates a cultural meaning which can embed itself in place-oriented norms and institutions. In Princeville, and other minority communities, histories of enslavement, racism, and Jim Crow conceptions of United States history contribute to the significance and symbolism of the town (Grace-McCaskey et al. 2021). This symbolism or "intangible cultural

heritage" (Armstrong-Fumero, 2017) holds power over community's decision making, despite the future risks.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Oral history interviews were conducted by the research team in Princeville, North Carolina, seeking to better understand the experiences of those who were impacted by Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew. In this section, I describe the oral life history interview process from start to finish, as well as the data analyses process.

Data Collection

Starting in October of 2019, oral life history interviews were conducted at the Princeville Temporary Town Offices in Tarboro, North Carolina. Interviews had to be conducted at this temporary location, as at the time of data collection, the town offices located in Princeville were still awaiting repair for damages due to Hurricane Matthew in 2016. These oral life interviews continued into the Spring of 2020 but ended abruptly when the COVID-19 pandemic caused global shutdowns and stay at home orders. It is because of these unprecedented events that we were only able to conduct seven interviews.

During the oral life history interview process, members of the community, those who live/lived in Princeville or the surrounding county during Hurricane Floyd or Matthew (or both), were asked to describe their experiences with the flood(s) in chronological order. Working closely with the town manager of Princeville, Dr. Glenda Knight, the team was able to communicate with the community directly, meeting many of the participants at the Senior Center, a community center that is attached to the temporary offices. When discussing events as life changing as Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew, it made the most sense to collect qualitative data through interviewing those most impacted. Using convenience and snowball sampling (Bernard, 2018), the team found participants by directly asking community members to be interviewed. A

$10 Walmart gift card was given to each participant who completed an interview as compensation and thanks for their time.

The research team consisted of three undergraduates, a graduate student, and a professor, all from East Carolina University. The undergraduates were participating in the project as part of their community outreach project required by the honors college at East Carolina University (ECU). Before this field work began, Cynthia Grace-McCaskey received approval for the study from ECU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each team member completed the required online forms to be added to the IRB UMCIRB 19-001994. Dr. Knight was consulted throughout the entire process, which helped the team meet members of the community at the temporary Princeville town offices, the senior center, and at a town hall meeting that we were invited to attend. The research team also attended the opening of the Princeville Mobile Museum, a mobile museum built by a team at North Carolina State which will house exhibits displaying Princeville's past.

This direct community engagement not only allowed opportunities to meet with members of the public but ensured that the community's best interests remained at the forefront of the project, balancing the power relations between us as researchers and the community (Watson and Waterton, 2010). As a group of "outsider" researchers entering a community that has often been left out of the historical narrative, the close collaboration with a trusted member of the Princeville community (Town Manager, Dr. Glenda Knight) aided in our acceptance and access to the people of Princeville. Connections are difficult to make in small towns like Princeville, making relationship building with the residents that much more important.

We used oral life history interviews as the primary method of data collection because these qualitative data offer a unique insight into the lives of those directly impacted by the

floods. The research team met virtually with Molly Graham, an oral life history expert who taught us how to properly conduct, record, and understand the interview process. The training taught the research team how to use the participants' words, emotions, and timelines to understand what they experienced, continue to experience and hope to improve. Information was collected regarding the dates the hurricanes impacted Princeville, the precipitation and flood data, the estimated costs of damages and the state/federal response. This information was collected by reviewing relevant literature. Building from these collected facts, an interview guide was created by the team, with questions ranging from where they were born, to what damage the storm caused to their homes/personal belongings.

When conducting the oral life history interviews, each participant was required to sign an informed consent document and asked for their permission to make their recorded interviews available to the public via the mobile museum or future projects, after being walked through the goals and ideas behind the Voices of Princeville project. Once a research team member had completed this explanation/documentation process, the interview itself began. The interviewer guided the participant through their life in a chronological order, asking questions about when and where they were born, and how long they had lived in Princeville. This chronological questioning has been shown to help the participant remember events, aiding in their recall of detail (Hagemaster, 1992). Each interviewer had a list of questions, an interview guide, to be used, in varying order depending on the response given by the participant. The interviews were semi-structured (Bernard, 2018), aiding in the interviewer's ability to use discretion in deciding what topic should be discussed next. Letting the participant lead the direction of the interviews helped them remain more comfortable (Bernard, 2018) when retelling their traumatic flood experiences.

Active listening, or "tell-me-more probing" (Bernard, 2018), was crucial during these interviews as open-ended questions were used to probe the participants (Louw et al. 2011). The interviewer remained active in the conversation, using body language and gestures to show the participant they were listening. If given an answer that seemed confusing or required clarification, the researcher would make this known to the participant, asking for clarification by using probing questions like, "do you mean that…" (Louw et al. 2011). Another aspect of these interviews that the research team had to remain aware of was the emotional nature of the questions being asked. A traumatic event was being discussed, and often, participants would get emotional when recounting their experiences. During these moments, active listening, allowing the participant to guide the direction of the conversation, and offering to change the questioning were used to reduce any distress.

Forms of probing used by the research team depended on the individual interview situation, the question being answered, and the emotional state of the participant. To reduce background noise, and to keep the audio focused on the story being told, the interviewer primarily used silent probing (Bernard, 2018). By remaining silent, the interviewer gave the participant time to fully answer the questions being asked, allowing them to complete their thought process (Bernard, 2018). Probing was important during these interviews as some participants were verbal, while some were less verbal (Bernard, 2018). Those who were verbal would go into detail, sometimes moving from one subject to another, possibly losing track of the intended question. To combat this, follow up questions would be asked like, "That is very interesting. Can you take me back to… (Bernard, 2018)?" Less verbal participants, those who were more reluctant when sharing their stories were encouraged to speak. Follow up questions,

not questions from the interview guide, would be asked to get more out of the participant. This technique was mostly successful, aiding in our ability to collect data.

Oral life histories as a method have been criticized for relying too heavily on a person's ability to remember, re-tell and be honest about their experiences (Grele et al. 2018). We did our best to minimize this issue. To counter the assumed lack of reliability for a participant to remember the more quantitative details (Grele et al. 2018), all the facts regarding the total rainfalls, the total costs of damages, and the hurricanes themselves were collected from the literature review of scientific journals, news catalogs, and other peer reviewed/reputable sources. The interviews were used to record and understand the experience of those impacted by the catastrophic floods, not the collection of quantitative data. The method of oral life histories was used because of its ability to collect the actual experiences, memories, and emotions of those participating.

Data Analysis

All the interviews conducted were recorded, digitally stored, and transcribed using an online service for later analysis. The transcriptions were edited by the team to match the interviews, as the online service was sometimes unable to distinguish what the participants were saying due to their accent. When transcribing, some words are written phonetically, as that is exactly how the participant pronounced the words. Transcribing this way allows the tone to be conveyed during text analysis.

Narrative analysis (Bernard, 2018) was conducted on the transcribed text, looking for common phrases and regularities in how those who experienced the storms in Princeville told their stories and discussed resilience. This was done by looking for common phrases across the seven interviews. Once the words and/or phrases were identified, they were placed into themed

groups. These themes were pride, emotion, and resilience. The research team determined these themes before conducting any preliminary analysis, using their experiences from the interviews to discuss what they expected to be the most prominent points discussed.

Words that were repeated by multiple participants were selected, listing the words, and placing them in their corresponding themes. These key-words-in-context (KWIC) provide excellent insight into the experiences of those being interviewed and allow researchers to understand what people are talking about by studying and analyzing the actual words that they used (Bernard, 2018).

To identify the KWIC, I read over the transcriptions and highlighted words that were most often repeated. Some of the words were placed into subcategories, made up of synonyms. An example of this is the word "mad." If one participant used the word "mad" while another used the word "anger," both words would be placed in the theme emotions, counting as two occurrences of "anger." This method was employed to ensure that the word lists were more concise.

Using this type of analysis played to the strengths of oral life histories. Instead of looking for exact phrases, created by a team of people unfamiliar with Princeville, this analysis allows us to use their exact phrases, tones, and expressions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I present the results of the Words-In-Context analysis of the seven oral life histories conducted in Princeville. The data are presented and discussed in terms of three themes (pride, emotions, and resilience), while relating back to the three research objectives of this thesis. This section delves into words and phrases associated with each theme while discussing what the experiences shared mean in contexts of post-disaster resilience and the information gained when using oral life history interviews. I will discuss the unexpected findings from the oral life history interviews, such as how some residents of the town do not consider themselves resilient, while others certainly do. The discussion portion of this chapter will examine what we learned during the interviews and how this method provides a better understanding of what the town of Princeville means to its occupants, why they stay in the town despite flood risks in the future, and how residents of the town think Princeville can become more resilient.

All the participants interviewed for this study were African American, over the age of thirty years old, and were originally from Princeville, or lived there prior to Hurricane Floyd. Among those who participated, there were county commissioners (former and present), former mayors, town historians, and locals who had experienced the storms firsthand, sharing with us their stories. Most of the participants shared their date of birth during the interviews, allowing us to know their exact age. Others, including Delores Porter, Calvin Adkins, and Felicia Colfield, did not share their exact age during the interview. These participants were placed into an age range. Below is a table showing their demographic characteristics (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Name	Race/Ethnicity	Age Range
Calvin Adkins	Black/African American	40-60
Linda Joyner	Black/African American	66
Linda Worsley	Black/African American	69
Delores Porter	Black/African American	61-89
James Bridgers	Black/African American	100
Felicia Colfield	Black/African American	30-50
Margie Colfield	Black/African American	92

The sample size is small, and not all age groups are represented. For example, no one under the age of thirty was interviewed. Members of this age group would be important to interview in the future, as they may have different perceptions of the community, and they are the future generations of Princeville that will take on the responsibility of the towns rebuilding, resilience and management. Additionally, future research should strive to include participants

from a diverse range of socio-economic classes, which could aid in examining the economic impact on people's decision to stay and rebuild or permanently leave Princeville.

Pride

When analyzing the interviews, it became clear that one major theme among the participants was a sense of *pride* about Princeville. Words like "history," "proud," "family," and "bravery" were mentioned in multiple interviews. The most common and central point of pride was that Princeville is the oldest town chartered by freed Blacks in America, which was mentioned by the participants in all seven interviews.

> *" ...It just, I just love the area. I don't know why. I just do, I just, I just love the area and that just for Princeville…I guess the history there is why I love…Princeville…so much history there and I like to see the history…continue." - Felicia Cofield*
>
> *"To me it means that I, I am living in a place where free slaves were brave enough, smart enough, intelligent enough to build our own town, to have their own…rules and regulations." – Linda Worsley*
>
> *"So, because of their resilience, because of their bravery. Today we live in Princeville, North Carolina, in the United States of America, the oldest town chartered by free slaves. And that I'm so proud of." – Linda Joyner*

A sub-theme, centered around pride, was the lack of representation of Princeville in mainstream media, education curriculums, and state/federal museums. This ties directly to objectives two and three, as working closely with the community helped gain insight into the misrepresentation and need to further education regarding Princeville. This community outreach and engagement brought with it better understanding of the challenges of representation (or lack thereof) and the repercussions of those left out of the historical narrative (Wright et al. 2020).

The community members of Princeville spoke about how they believe Princeville's history should be included in the curriculum of public schools across not only the state of North Carolina, but the entire United States.

Calvin Adkins, an interviewee with deep interest in the town's history, spoke in depth about how Princeville being the first town chartered by freed Blacks in America is a point of pride for him, and many others. He also spoke about how other towns, specifically Eatonville, Florida, make claim to the title of "first" but it rightfully belongs to Princeville. However, the lack of education and exposure of and about the town makes it unknown to many. It was not until 1999 when Floyd hit that Princeville gained any national media attention, and even then, it was not the town's history, but its tragedy that captured the nation's interest. All participants who related their pride back to Princeville's founding noted the town's lack of exposure. When asked why they thought the town was not being discussed, one participant stated that it was:

> *"Because we were predominantly Black town. That's it in a nutshell because of who we are and who they were." – Linda Worsley*

The consensus of the participants was that the lack of representation in the cultural and historical narrative of United States history stems from the fact that Princeville is a Black town, with a Black population. This relates back directly to how Adkins (2020) described Princeville's story being silenced in the historical consciousness of everyone, including residents of Princeville.

Building on Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was developed in the 1970s in reaction to the failure of legal studies to address the effects of race and racism in U.S. jurisprudence (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004), these interviews show community member perceptions of how race and racism impact education about Princeville. CRT relates to education with its tenet of counter-storytelling, a process Adkins (2020) argues is occurring in Princeville. Counter-

storytelling is a process described by Delgado and Stefencic (2001) as a story-telling method that seeks to cast doubt on the validity pr pre-existing and accepted premises or myths held by the majority. Research that uses counter-storytelling aids in the undoing of misleading and false historical narratives (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004).

It is through research like the Voices of Princeville project, and the continued collaboration between academics and locals that the story and history of Princeville can finally be drawn out from the shadows of Jim Crow and cast into the spotlight it has always deserved. Research like this aids in the honest retelling of U.S. history, removing the white-washed, racist, and bigoted undertones that often run rampant throughout historical narratives (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004).

The oral life histories conducted in Princeville also shed light on community members' perceptions of and opinions about moving the town to a recently acquired 53-acre plot of land located outside of the floodplain, the lifting of homes and other buildings, the rebuilding of the levee and other forms of resilience and town preparedness. This information and insight gained is directly related to research objectives one, two and three as the collaboration and use of oral life histories helped gain better understanding of the community members' perceptions of public policy changes and the issues that residents of Princeville are currently facing (Wright et al. 2020).

When asked about the possibility of moving the town of Princeville to the 53-acre parcel, the responses of those interviewed were both negative and positive.

> *"Oh, it's fine with me because that will bring some of our younger people back to the town of Princeville." – Linda Worsley*

"…to really rebuild the town of Princeville locally, I'm not talking about the 53 acres locally wherever, the history of actually began, that um, it would bring more people to the state of North Carolina." – Linda Worsley

"Um, well, you know, they want to put some, someone put houses out there and things. Out there at the 53 acres and you know, it floods out there too. So, um, like I said, it's kind of mixed, you know, feel that. I don't know. I guess they have a way to build it up or something. I don't know. But that's how I feel about it." – Felecia Cofield

"Honestly… I've expressed myself about this too. Um, Princeville was only Main Street, Howard Street, Church Street, to Beasley street. You know, that was as far as Princeville went. When these other areas were annexed, of course, that's when we got, they got to recall Princeville. That 53 acres may be good to have, but that 53 acres was flooded in nine minutes. So, if you're going to say I can't do anything for you because of the flood prone area, how are you going to build something on that 53 acres when it was part of a flood prone area. I have questions about that." -Dr. Delores Porter

By understanding the pride of the Princeville residents, researchers can have a better understanding of their connection to place, a possible explanation to why they stay in a region so prone to flooding. Princeville, as a geographical location, as the land that no one wanted and was claimed by the newly freed people, is closely related to the meaningful values, histories, and sense of connection described by Princeville residents, referred to as a "sense of place" (Rogers and Bragg, 2013). Overall, the participants spoke about Princeville's history, its community, and about how being a citizen of Princeville is about more than just living in a town, it is ancestral. Linda Joyner, a long-time Princeville resident, and survivor of both Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew explained what it means to be asked why she does not just move away from Princeville:

"And then for somebody to say to me, why don't you guys just leave it? So, what you're asking me to do, sir, is to give up that, that our ancestors went through blood, sweat and tears." – Linda Joyner

This connection to the town is not something that we as a research team sought to understand. Rather, we were there to collect their experiences with the floods, how they thought Princeville was resilient, and how the town could better prepare for future storms. By this, I mean that the primary purpose of the interviews was originally to see how the residents of Princeville believe that their town can better withstand storms, if at all. In essence, we were interested in action and ideas. Instead, we learned about their connection to place, their sense of ancestral pride and commitment, and their perceived inability to leave Princeville, as some feel that they are not just residents of Princeville, but that they *are* Princeville. This insight and understanding of connection to place and the reasons why many feel they are unable to leave the town permanently is related to research objectives two and three and adds to existing literature about oral life histories and their use in community engaged research and outreach.

Connection to place plays an important role in a community's decision to rebuild in the aftermath of disaster. In Princeville, this symbolic meaning of the town, and the community's connection to its geographical place, play important roles in the decisions made for the town's future (Grace-McCaskey et al. 2021). Historical ties and self-identity in minority populations influence decisions over whether residents should leave, or remain, in the aftermath of disaster. Factors like cultural norms, income, home ownership, and age also influence why people make the decision to stay and rebuild, or to leave the area (Grace-McCaskey et al. 2021).

Using oral life histories, a deeper truth and understanding can be revealed (Wright et al. 2020). By collecting the participants' stories, and examining their own phrases and thought

processes, we were able to gain a better understanding of what it means to be from, and a part of, the community of Princeville. Our project relied on the participants' honest responses, collecting how they felt at the time of the interview, looking back at the events being discussed. We were able to identify their sense of pride about the town's history as one of the main reasons they stayed. The people of Princeville speak about their roots being intertwined with the town itself, a symbol of the heritage and connection to freed slaves. The community entity is spoke about as though it is a living symbol that they must preserve and protect. The rebuilding of community centers, museums, and town halls after hurricane damages, regardless of the guarantee of future damages, supports this. By preserving the community capital, or the places with the most centralized importance, their community ties are strengthened.

Emotions

When using oral life histories as a primary research method, researchers are given a unique insight into the experiences and lives of those being interviewed (Dunaway, 1992). At the time we were conducting these interviews, specifically when asking the participants to tell the stories of when Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew hit, the theme of *emotions* were obvious, as we as researchers were working in the space between tragedy and memory that Sloan (2008) describes. This theme became even more apparent when the interviews were discussed during preliminary analysis by the research team. Participants often described in detail the way they felt both before the waters began to rise, when the flooding occurred, and when they were able to go back into their homes. Words including "trauma," "sadness," "shocked," and "stress" were found throughout the interviews, with many participants noting that they still experience these emotions when reliving or worrying about future hurricanes.

"That was devastating. I had never seen anything like that. Um, Princeville had always flooded but Princeville didn't flood like it did when Floyd came." – Linda Worsley

The participants did not speak about the total sum of rainfall, or the dollar value of the damages caused by the storm. Instead, they walked the team through the storms, providing a window into their experiences and trauma. Many noted that the flooding from Floyd was unexpected, as until then, the levee had held up against other storms, protecting the town from the rising Tar River. Because of this false assurance, residents were reluctant to evacuate when the river began to rise. Margie Colfield, a lifelong Edgecombe County resident whose home was destroyed in Hurricane Floyd told the team about how, despite seeing the waters rise, she was still certain the flooding was not going to happen, and decided to try to stay in her home:

"You know, so we, I thought they were the waters just hadn't had time to soak in really, you know, so we didn't do anything about moving anything or anything." – Margie Colfield

Emotions during the storms were not the only ones discussed in these interviews. The long-lasting trauma and sadness remain years after Floyd and Matthew made landfall. Margie Colfield explained:

"But you know, you realize then how quick you can be homeless, you know, you think, well you got it made the rest of your life. All of a sudden you are homeless. You know?"- Margie Colfield

She went on to tell us about how she feels living in the home that she is in now:

"I'm in the area that don't think will flood but of course they didn't think that area would flood either. So." – Margie Colfield

Multiple participants spoke about how the reminder of future floods and hurricanes remains, years after Hurricane Matthew in 2016, including Commissioner Joyner who discussed the magnitude of the devastation of the hurricane:

> *"It was, it's devastating it even now to this day when a hard, hard rain comes, you're going like, wow, is it gonna flood again? So we're not ignorant to the fact that it can happen." -Linda Joyner*

When working with a community like Princeville, oral histories made it clear that the impact of the storms is much more than a monetary figure, or a time of reconstruction, and that resilience is not just a structural buzz-word for the town, but a personal endeavor that each member of the community must make themselves.

Resilience

Perhaps some of the most surprising findings come from the theme of *resilience*. Originally the main focus of the project, the idea was to use oral life histories to better understand what the people of Princeville believe resilience for their town means, and what measures can be taken both by individual residents and the town government to better prepare and protect from future floods. While the participants did have ideas as to what the town's government can do to better prepare the town, the meaning of resilience was at times different between the research team and those interviewed. This was not something that we as a research team expected to learn, lending support to research objective three.

When asked about ways that the town could better prepare for future storms, participants spoke about lifting homes, moving to the 53-acre plot of land, rebuilding the levee, and using water pumps to move the course that the flood waters take. One common response among the participants was that there were no new ideas for resilience or plans that could be instituted to

lessen the damages of future storms. Instead, participants were relaying information and ideas that are commonly, if not already used, to fight flooding in flood prone areas, Princeville included. By this, I mean that there are central ideas shown throughout the community of what a resilient Princeville means, how it looks, and the necessary steps to reach a safer, more storm ready community.

Town Commissioner Linda Joyner spoke about resilience often throughout her interview, calling it a "stick-to-itty",

> *"Um, resilience doesn't have to always be a fight. Resilience is a stick-to-itty. I'm going to hang in there and I'm going to be happy and I'm going to be comfortable and I'm going to make it good for somebody else. Resilience is not so much about yourself. Really resilience is making it good for somebody else, right?" – Linda Joyner*

This altruistic version of resilience, making flood readiness and preparation better for others and not yourself, gives insight into the sense of community resilience that connects those residents of Princeville that we interviewed. The town comes first in this version of resilience. Commissioner Joyner spoke about how the 53-acre plot of land is not just a resilient method of rebuilding the town and preparing for storms, but that it represents life, of both the town and its people.

Interestingly, our research found that unlike Commissioner Joyner, some of residents of Princeville do not consider themselves resilient. As told by Calvin Adkins, resilience is a "word used by outsiders" and that the people of Princeville "just live it":

> *"Yeah, I mean it, that's where that word is used by outsiders. More than, more than we are. You know, we just live it. We don't, you know, whatever it is, you call it what you want to, we're not going in the world, you know, so we just, we just live it. We don't, we*

don't call it resilience. We just say, Hey, I want to be here. I mean, that's the right word to use. But, we don't, we don't say resilience. That was just outside of people who see what we are doing and why, but they don't know why we are doing it." – Calvin Adkins

Resilience in this context implies that there are other options, that moving the town to a nearby plot of land or lifting homes to avoid flood damage is a choice that the people of the town can make. Princeville is a town that was chartered by freed slaves, on land that no one else wanted and that white farmers had deemed unworthy. This communal memory is usually explained by community members when speaking about their sense of duty towards their town. They speak about how they are obligated to rebuild Princeville after storms and floods, making the town better for future generations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Oral life histories, when used in close community collaboration and outreach, can shed light on forgotten history, connection to place, and resilience while providing insights and understanding of the lived experiences of those interviewed. In Princeville, post-disaster interviews collected the experiences of those directly impacted by Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew, encapsulating their stories, using their own words and voices to relay their emotions, pride, and ideas of resiliency. With close community connections and collaboration, this thesis is an example of how community engagement is important in academia. Without it, certain narratives and stories will continue to be silenced by those who are in power, those who may remain unaware of the histories all around them.

Not only do oral life histories shed light on stories, experiences, and lives of those in Princeville, they provide insight into aspects of the town that were not originally sought. These conflicting ideas of resilience, the immense pride and connection to place, the hope, and ideas of what a future in Princeville looks like were not all anticipated by the research team. By using these themes, and the interviews themselves, researchers can help identify missing pieces in historical narratives, and help amplify the voices of those from marginalized communities such as Princeville.

By conducting oral life histories and engaging in community outreach and research, better policies and routes of communication can be implemented, better serving those impacted by the storms. For example, by understanding their perceptions, risk preparedness, and ideas of resiliency, the people of Princeville can be better represented in policy, public resource management, and disaster preparations. As shown by the research conducted in Berkshire, England the communication between communities must be adapted based on their actual risk of disaster. In the town of Princeville, the likelihood of future flooding is high, if not guaranteed.

This means that the town will face future damages. By conducting research like this thesis, researchers can work with the community, local and state governments to build from the experiences of the past and create a more storm-ready future.

The interviews used in this thesis provide qualitative insights into the lives of those directly impacted by not only floods brought on by hurricanes, but also the shadow cast by racism and bias in the historical narrative. These interviews tell not just the individual stories of those interviewed, but the communal story of Princeville, and will continue to educate, inform, and inspire community members and visitors alike in the Mobile Princeville Museum. More research like this needs to be done, not just in Princeville, but in any community whose story has been disregarded and left in the past. By working with these communities, researchers help find the voices of those forgotten, providing a platform for those who have not been given the chance to speak. Oral life histories are more than just a qualitative research method, instead they are an insight into the lives of others, an irreplaceable experience.

Limitations of This Research

In the face of the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic, the interviews being collected in Princeville came to a sudden halt. With community centers shutting down, stay-at-home orders in place, and the overwhelming fear of what impact the virus would have on the world, only seven interviews were able to be conducted for the Voices of Princeville project. With access to the community being shut off, and many Princeville residents still displaced from Hurricane Matthew, the quest to find willing and able participants was no longer an option. Virtual or over-the-phone interviews were not an option, as the oral life histories were digitally recorded, and relied heavily on body language and non-verbal probing. This led to a smaller sample size than the research team had originally hoped for, skewing our expected data outcomes. However, while the sample size is small, the rich, in-depth data collected during the interviews provide

unique insight into the people of Princeville, their experiences with Hurricanes Floyd and Matthew, their ideas of resilience, and the future of their town. These seven interviews provided deep understanding of participants' connection to place, forgotten histories, and what it means to be from the first town chartered by Freed Blacks. These seven interviews did exactly what all researchers using oral life histories hope for when using the method; they provided a safe place for the stories of those left out of the historical narrative to finally be told. In the future, collecting additional oral histories with participants from a range of demographic groups (e.g., socio-economic status) will aid in our understanding of how different factors influence residents' perceptions of the town's resilience.

Next Steps

Using the information from the Voices of Princeville project, and the themes found in the analysis for this thesis, we developed an exhibit for Princeville's Mobile Museum. This mobile museum prominently boasts the year "1885" in large metal numbers, signifying the town's incorporation date. Sitting on a trailer that can easily be hauled from one location to the next, this museum can not only be evacuated if faced with another storm, but it can travel from one site to the next, bringing with it and preserving the story of Princeville.

Future research should build from the Voices of Princeville project, further examining themes such as attachment to place, communal memory, and the silencing of historical consciousness and narratives. Working directly with the community while keeping their interests, challenges, and concerns at the forefront of the project, there is still plenty to learn about Princeville. In the United States, there is still systemic racism pushing minority groups into the shadows of the country's collective memory and concern (Trouillot, 1997), but with

more engagement and the retelling of these stories, the histories which have previously been hidden away or silenced can be heard.

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APPENDIX

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
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Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 ·
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Amendment Approval

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Cynthia Grace-McCaskey
CC:
Date: 9/27/2019
Re: Amal UMCIRB 19-001994
UMCIRB 19-001994
Princeville Perceptions of Resilience

Your Amendment has been reviewed and approved using expedited review on 9/27/2019. It was the determination of the UMCIRB Chairperson (or designee) that this revision does not impact the overall risk/benefit ratio of the study and is appropriate for the population and procedures proposed.

Please note that any further changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

If applicable, approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Document	Description
Sub Investigators Added: Coelson, Evans, Pothiwala & Raleigh	

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.