

Transformative White Identity as a Teacher Educator: A Poetic Narrative Autoethnography

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Dedication

For my partner, Winona, who is my best friend, confidant, and unconditional support.

For my children, Asher and Roan, who are the brightest parts of every day.

For my parents John, Carolyn, Bettie, and Jordan, who are, and always will be, the mentors and teachers that I aspire to be.

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Abstract

Whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are oppressive power structures that invisibly condition educational relationships among all students, teachers, and teacher educators. To undermine this destructive pattern, white teacher educators must actively commit to an ongoing and life-long process of white identity (re)formation that informs antiracist pedagogical praxis and models self-reflective practices for their pre-service teachers. The purpose of this poetic narrative evocative autoethnography is to show but one example of how a white teacher educator might begin this emotionally forward transformative experience.

The researcher, a white teacher educator at a southeastern United States public 4-year institution, developed a narrative poetic evocative autoethnography of his emotional interactions with his white identity. Utilizing the poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity, critical whiteness studies, and the emotionally forward writing concepts of the *mestiza consciousness* the poetic narrative shares his unique transformative experience. The following research question and sub-questions guided the study: RQ1. How can I keep myself from reinscribing whiteness, white supremacy, and enacting white privilege as a white teacher educator? RQ1a. How do I reconcile my whiteness, which cannot be denied, with my responsibility to teach educators to create and sustain just and equitable classrooms for all learners? RQ1b. How am I reflective/reflexive about my own identity (re)development through, and as a result of, the emotions connected to seeing and understanding my whiteness? RQ1c. How can I authentically explore the fluid process of my white identity (re)development that encourages and supports an antiracist pedagogy?

The poetic narrative was analyzed using Helms' (2020) and Howard's (2016) white identity models and by exploring the structural and emotional elements that make the writing

deeply personal. This analysis found that there is no definitive, fixed, or finite way in which to prevent the reinscription of whiteness, white supremacy, or white privileged behavior as a white teacher educator. Humbly, this research suggests that only through the committed and ongoing process of better knowing themselves as white can a teacher educator work toward being an antiracist educator who actively threatens the further entrenchment of whiteness, white supremacy, or white privileged among pre-service teachers.

Index words: whiteness, white privilege, white supremacy, critical whiteness studies, mestiza consciousness, white Identity, autoethnography, poetic narrative

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During my teaching residency year, I conducted an action research project titled, “Comfortable with Controversy in the English Classroom” (Jenkinson, 2011). This very limited study had as its’ aim to better understand how and why teachers had critical conversations with their students about potentially controversial topics, such as race/racism, sex/sexuality, religion, and violence. As I learned how all three teachers I interviewed navigated dangerous confrontations in their classrooms, I became aware for the first time of the great power that a teacher has. Sometimes these teachers wielded seemingly total control dictating what, who, and how a conversation evolved and got resolved. Other times the teachers yielded control to their students and encouraged discomfort and discontent, challenging not only their students but themselves to critical thought. For the first time, I considered that teaching was more than a limited list of pedagogical skills. I saw the powerful possibilities of the classroom and the fact that I played a central role in that space.

Several years of teaching later, I returned to that original study and rereading it, I saw ever more clearly, that I was continuing to develop a critical eye for exploring and understanding how I was enacting power in the classroom. In my high school English language arts space, I sought to extend my learners’ exposure to varied texts and cultural perspectives. I added to the typical American literature curriculum the stories of indigenous peoples, articulated the experiences of enslaved peoples from their words, and evaluated white canonical texts through economic and patriarchal lenses. As often as possible, I actively encouraged critique of current events and worked to bring modern world experiences into my classroom, addressing human rights matters, political division/upheaval, and environmental collapse and tragedy. In retrospect,

I identify these unscripted and extra-curricular moments as some of the most inspiring and engaging of my teaching.

In 2015, I left the secondary education classroom and became a teacher educator at a Southeastern University. As I began instructing pre-service teachers and stepping back to analyze teaching in general, I began another reevaluation about my power in the classroom; this time however, it came as an uncomfortable dissection of the instructional decisions I had made for ten years. Not only did I question the actions I took and specific curricular choices I made, but more and more I realized that there was a layer of my teaching practice that I was unaware of or unwilling to investigate. I was unsure and shaken about who I was as a teacher educator with broader influence and power. While I argued and advocated for an equitable classroom environment for all my learners up to this point, I was now able to see that it was not enough to say the right words to challenge the invisible influences of whiteness and white supremacy.

While it was not initially my intention to focus my doctoral studies on this uncertainty about my role as a teacher, I discovered that I was spending more and more time reflecting on it. I recall vivid and disquieting moments of self-doubt about my teaching as I learned about critical pedagogy, the social influences of wealth on schools, and most notably, the deeply rooted and invisible influences of whiteness. I became deeply disquieted about how little I knew about myself as a racialized individual. And, returning to my earliest actions as a teacher writing about controversial topics, I became even more bothered by how the whiteness I never knew existed affected the decisions I made. It was during the long drives home from my class sessions during my doctoral coursework that forced me to wrestle with this unrecognized reality. I became aware that there were deeper realizations about the influences on my teaching that I needed to investigate. Each day I discussed teaching decisions I had made, more and more elements of the

basic nature of my classroom presence were uncovered for critique and challenge. It was making these connections and seeing these gaps between being white and being a teacher educator that came together to form the topic of this dissertation.

Before I can effectively teach preservice teachers about the power they wield in their classrooms, I need to better know the power I use myself. This dissertation represents the beginning, and not the end, of that process. Through the creation of an evocative autoethnography I seek to better know who I am as a white person attempting to be a teacher educator who progresses toward a more just teaching practice that is actively antiracist.

Problem Statement

Since 2015, the majority of students in the United States are people of color and the majority of teachers and teacher candidates are white (Riser-Kositsky, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Within teacher education programs, multiple scholars have uncovered the lack of attention given to preparing educators to effectively teach and build relationships with this growing diverse population (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Ladson- Billings, 1999, Sleeter, 2017; Solomona et al., 2005; etc.). According to this research, many teacher education curriculums attempt to address these concerns through a single multicultural education course that, Sleeter (2017) argues, simply checks the diversity education box. By isolating the diverse needs of students of color to singular, limited experiences, white teachers are further allowed to distance themselves from a true critique of how to actively confront the challenging issues of race, racism, and/or white supremacy that perpetuate inequity among all students (Ladson- Billings, 1999; Thompson, 2003). In effect, by making multicultural education segmented from the rest of the curriculum, a teacher education program persists in protecting and hiding whiteness by not providing the space for it to be discussed or critiqued (Leonardo, 2013; Sleeter, 2017).

The hidden curriculum of whiteness within teacher education persists without challenge and generates white normative behaviors among faculty and students that reinscribe white supremacy and cast a long shadow on preservice teachers as they leave for their first teaching jobs (Hytten, 1997; Milner, 2008). Daniels & Varghese (2019) note that there is vast scholarship that links “practice-based teacher education” to an inscription and perpetuation of whiteness as the normalized and invisible center of teacher education as a whole (p. 60). Their argument goes that by invisibly centering whiteness and the power laden practices that uphold it, white supremacist systems are re-taught and un-scrutinized. Without this critique the practices are then reified as “best” or “core practices” despite the potential that they may marginalize or completely alienate students/teacher candidates of color (Daniels & Varghese, 2019; Daniels, 2018).

Given this context, Howard (2016) suggests that a white teacher educator who intends to challenge this white supremacist system can use their privilege to “neither deify nor denigrate White people, but to defuse the destructive power of White dominance” (p. 118). In effect, the white teacher educator finds themselves in a unique location to “ensure that whiteness is tabled as a viable subject for examination” from within the educational space that is built from strategies designed to protect it (Solomona, et al. 2005, p. 148). By making whiteness intentionally visible teacher educators, “begin to shoulder some of the burden of race” and in so doing present for those they teach neither a qualified good nor denigrated bad model of a teacher seeking to address white hegemony in education (Matias & Mackey, 2015, p. 48).

Combating, challenging, and confronting a perniciously embedded white supremacist system that is self-regenerating is certainly an uphill battle and one in which both those who oppress and are oppressed must take part, albeit in different ways. In addressing this challenge of

dismantling oppressive structural systems from within, Freire (2000/1970) presents a critical framework of thinking:

Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both [the oppressor and the oppressed]. Any attempt to ‘soften’ the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity. (p. 44)

Therefore, to address white supremacy, whiteness, and white privilege with the goal of freeing both the oppressed and the oppressors, a scholar who is a member of the oppressive system must both understand and be critically aware of their participation in the white oppressive structure as well as ardently work to decenter themselves by better understanding their own identity and the implications that their identity has on their actions/choices (Matias & Mackey, 2015). These two processes, understanding your participation in oppression and understanding the implication of your own identity, can help to create a more equitable space in which the currently oppressed can thrive and the oppressor’s power recedes. White teacher educators who commit to such processes have long term impacts on their students as they present a model for how to decenter whiteness in the practice of teaching and create educational spaces that are safe for students of color.

White Identity (Re)development as a Teacher Educator

This dissertation will explore the process of understanding the ways in which I, as a white teacher educator, dismantle and expose my whiteness through a process of white identity (re)development¹. This study represents but one path that I choose to move toward becoming a better antiracist teacher educator. The intent is not to position myself as a paragon example of the

¹ I use the terminology (re)development to identify that the process of identity development I am outline is a recursive one that requires constant attention and care. By isolating the (re) is note that I am again and again questions my development and realize that it will never fully come to an end.

good white antiracist teacher or a poster child of the *friend of students of color*. The intent is not to define or suggest specific pedagogical tools/practices to become a better race ally white or “woke” white teacher. The intent is not to recenter my own whiteness in the conversation by absolving myself of white guilt/shame through confessions.

This dissertation’s focus is on exposing who I am as *white*, with a racialized identity, through the presentation of a poetic narrative autoethnography that will, “begin to shift ... perceptions, investments, and involvements,” and “seek to alter situations so that, ... we can explore fresh possibilities of responsiveness” to a position of being white (Thompson, 2003, pp. 20). The larger impact of this work is its use as an example for other teacher educators who exemplify whiteness in their teaching to “burden yourself and not your students [with]...the hopes of dismantling white supremacy in education” (Matias & Mackey, 2015, p. 48).

Daniels & Varghese (2019) argue for a model of teacher education practice that “centers teacher subjectivity as defining of practice itself” (pp. 61). My research centers itself on how I, as white teacher educator, go about better understanding my subjectivity as part of my teaching practice. And through that understanding how I can work in a constructive and nonreductive way that acknowledges that there is no end or arrival that will signal that I am an antiracist teacher. Rather this process is open about the pitfalls, missteps, mistakes, and blunders that are important twists and turns in developing a white identity that lives up to being a part of an ethically just and moral human community.

Titone (1998) shares that “teaching is never a neutral act,” and that a teacher’s identity will inevitably influence the classroom environment and their relationship with their students (p. 172). I consider that in having challenging conversations and in making race and whiteness

related assertions all students will be uncomfortable (Matias, et al. 2017; Sleeter, 2017). Winans (2012) frames the situation this way,

White students often struggle when their familiar and seemingly raceless identities are disrupted; this is a major source of discomfort as they grapple with the recognition that their experience of identity is bound up with the identities of others in ways that are beyond their control. (p. 156-157)

Within this thinking there is a salient comment about the concept of discomfort as part of this dissertation; uncomfortable and unsafe are not the same thing. Matias et al. (2017), acknowledge to their students openly and early that conversations in the classroom will be tough or difficult, and that disruption of previously held beliefs will be possible/frequent. The emotions associated with the disruption of whiteness are personally uncomfortable to be sure; however, I find safety in the process that does not negate my emotions but moves through and then past them. This movement is but one step that is necessary in the progression of dismantling whiteness and (re)developing a white identity that is focused on being antiracist (Matias, et al. 2017; Love, 2019).

Research Questions

To explore this problem specifically, this study seeks to answer this large research question.

1. How can I keep myself from reinscribing whiteness, white supremacy, and enacting white privilege as a white teacher educator?

To better address this very broad and involved idea I will focus my research with the following sub-questions:

- 1.1 How do I reconcile my whiteness, which cannot be denied, with my responsibility to teach educators to create and sustain just and equitable classrooms for all learners?
- 1.2 How am I reflective/reflexive about my own identity (re)development through, and as a result of, the emotions connected to seeing and understanding my whiteness?
- 1.3 How can I authentically explore the fluid process of my white identity (re)development that encourages and supports an antiracist pedagogy?

Subjectivity Statement

Acknowledging my subjectivity is the tool that I use to provide my reader the lens through which to openly expose the particularity of my research relative to the specific world view I am uncovering (Given, 2016; Johnson & Christensen, 2020). While a goal of qualitative research is to be interpretative of lived experiences in order for that lived experience to be understood, the consumer of the research must be able to see how the researcher's own perspectives have influenced the research process. My lived experiences, biases, and intersectional identities influence the research questions I ask, the methodology I choose, the words and stories I knit together, and ultimately the assertions and findings I publish (Crenshaw, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 21). My subjectivity informs the theoretical frames I choose to utilize and how I read those theories is "always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity" that I inhabit (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 21). This filtered gaze conditions every aspect of this project and by divulging my subjectivity, I can make clear how my research's findings can and should be assessed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Objectivity, taken as the opposite of subjectivity, would suggest that I could, without bias, create and present a research product not affected by my own personal experiences.

However, as a qualitative researcher seeking to explain my own experiences with and understandings of my whiteness as a teacher educator through an evocative autoethnographic study objectivity is neither possible nor desirable (Chang, 2008; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). This dissertation's distinct focus on my personal interactions in varied places, at varied times, and with a variety of topics and situations gives it the unique quality of being a truth that I am the singular owner of (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014). Therefore, in order to inform the reader of this study about the unique perspective from which this work comes, declaring my experiences in educational spaces, as well as acknowledging and sharing my race, gender identification, socioeconomic class, ethnic, religious, (dis)ability, and educational level are all necessary (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Each of these elements of my identity overlap and come together to condition my attitudes and actions related to my epistemological, ontological, and methodological choices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

My subjectivity in this process can be articulated in this way: I identify as a middle aged, white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender, male who was raised in a Judeo-Christian environment before choosing agnosticism as an adult. My upbringing was in the American South in a middle-class home with two graduate educated parents (who have been married for 50+ years) and an older sibling who also identifies as white and male.

My current circumstances are strikingly like my upbringing. My partner and I are both graduate educated and identify as white. We have two white children whom we have chosen to identify as male; although the ultimate decision of their gender identity is theirs when they deem it appropriate to make that choice. Prior to moving into my current teacher education position, I worked for 10 years as a secondary English language arts teacher in the Southeastern United States. Financially, our employment and the geographic area in which we live have placed us in

the middle class. Physically, we are all able bodied. These elements of my past and present experience provide me much privilege in America and the globalized society of today (Leonardo, 2002; McIntosh, 1989; Spring, 2018). These elements of my identity condition my research regarding my own white identity within teacher education.

Road Map of this Project

This dissertation uses a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity to deconstruct identity related to whiteness in a teacher education setting. Chapter 2 begins by defining the relevant terminology of whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy as these ideas and their relationship to each other are vital to understanding the theoretical foundations of this work. Then, I explore and position poststructuralism, critical whiteness studies, and the mestiza consciousness as the theoretical approaches that form the basis for this study's exploration of my white identity (re)development. Next in Chapter 2, I describe and relate two models for conceptualizing the transitional phases of white identity development that help to clarify how the process I am undertaking links to the pedagogical perspective of antiracism. These terms, theories, and models work together to help orient the nuances of the unique personal process of white identity (re)development that are employed in the evocative autoethnographic methodology.

In Chapter 3, I define the evocative autoethnographic methodology that I used to create the poetic narrative representation of my white identity (re)development story. This chapter serves the dual purposes of positioning the methodological process that is unique to an autoethnographic study while also describing the goals and characteristics of the final produced autoethnography. By looking at the historical evolution of this qualitative research approach and considering the distinctions between varied types and methods I consider the appropriate

application of this method to my research question. As well, I consider some of the relevant critiques of autoethnography that are necessary to understand before embarking on this transformative research journey. Finally, in this chapter, I detail the four-step process that I used to create the autoethnography that is shared in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I share the refined poetic narrative autoethnography as a cohesive and uninterrupted text that represents the transformative story at the heart of this study. Metaphorically presented as stars in a unique constellation of my identity, the poems in this section are presented in an intentional narrative arch in which setting, theme, and character all contribute to the understanding of the developing vision of myself as a white teacher educator. This representation of the epiphanic moments that outline my white identity (re)development show the complex and emotionally layered process that I encountered and, in a new and personal way, convey a compelling story that is, I hope, accessible to a broad audience.

Chapter 5 begins by examining the autoethnographic process of engaging with my white identity and then transitions into an analysis of the emotions and thematic connections that exist in the autoethnographic narrative. Utilizing the theoretical foundations, white identity models, and pedagogical positions presented in Chapter 2, the analysis of the poetic narrative autoethnography provokes a larger conversation about the possible outcomes of this process for teacher education. By locating through emotion and thematic coding, I trace my white identity (re)development on two models (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016) intricately related to the four antiracist pedagogical positions. In making these alignments I challenge myself and other white teacher educators to actively seek to know themselves as white. And with this illumination of discovered identity, I look to the future implications of this work as it might encourage other teacher educators to engage in a similar process of identity (re)development.

Chapter 1 Summary

The problem addressed by this dissertation is the embedded whiteness in teacher education that perpetuates white supremacy by never challenging white teachers to engage in the troubling and difficult task of understanding themselves as racialized humans. As a white teacher educator, I am complicit in this system and from my earliest teaching experiences, I avoided challenging myself to understand who I was as a white teacher. I avoided the painful acknowledgement of the emotions I used to evade this challenge. And I avoided the necessary and ongoing work to know more about the systems that allowed me to remain ignorant of this reality.

In this study, I am knowingly, willingly, and honestly, engaging in the process to better know myself as a white teacher educator. It will be difficult, challenging, uncomfortable and in the end never fully complete (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016). However, it is a process that is necessary if the cycle of invisible whiteness will ever be challenged in educational spaces. It is a vital step in encouraging and instructing pre-service teachers to become more equitable and just to all their future students. As this transformative process of white identity (re)development remains one of constant change and challenge, I am devoted to this work as my goal is to be a “white teacher working to be better than he was”, as I am fully aware that I will make mistakes, regress, and progress many, many times.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will review the literature regarding the relevant terminology and the theoretical frames to be used in this dissertation. First, the terms whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy will be defined. Second, poststructuralism, critical whiteness studies (CWS), and mestiza consciousness will be explored by looking at their development, the central elements/tenets that typify each, and how these concepts are applied as theoretical frameworks for my evocative autoethnography. Third and finally, I will detail and explore the literature that supports two different models of white identity (re)formation and link those models to four antiracist pedagogical perspectives. The connections presented in this chapter will provide the foundational elements necessary to support my evocative autoethnographic exploration of my white identity as a teacher educator.

Terminology

The terminology whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy will be used consistently in this study. In this section, I will clarify how they are contextualized and understood given the relevant literature.

Whiteness

Whiteness is a socially constructed categorization rather than an “inherently meaningful” biological conception of race (Frankenberg, 1993). Schooley et al. (2019), citing numerous scholars (e.g. Allen, 1994; DuBois, 1998/1935; Roedigger, 1992, etc.), note that “whiteness was invented as a means for ruling elites to retain power by providing a psychological wage linked to social gain for White workers” (p. 531). Roedigger’s (2002) further understanding that “white identity is decisively shaped by the exercise of power and the expectation of advantages in acquiring property” is crucial to the concept of how whiteness is defined and enacted (p. 23).

Gillborn (2005) posits that “one of the most powerful and dangerous aspects of whiteness...[is] that many (possibly the majority) of white people have no awareness of whiteness as a construction, let alone their own role in sustaining and playing out the inequities at the heart of whiteness” (p. 490). From these elemental positions, whiteness is here defined as the invisible set of norms developed to condition all people into a prescribed set of practices and thoughts that reinforce the centrality of white people’s claim to an authoritarian oppressive status.

At this point in thinking about whiteness, two points of clarification are necessary. First, as noted by Amico (2015), Laughter (2019), and Leonardo (2002), whiteness is not to be conflated with white people. Whiteness as a “racial discourse” operates on all people; however, white people represent “a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color” and from that identity their enactment of whiteness derives (Leonardo, 2002, p. 31). Second, whiteness and white people are not to be considered monolithic or essentialized; each person has distinctive qualities and whiteness itself is contingent and mutable within lived experiences (Haney-Lopez, 2006). An outcome of whiteness’s application on the lived experiences of white people is the unintentional and invisible benefit of the legacy of whiteness in the form of white privilege.

White Privilege

McIntosh (1988 & 1989) offers what is cited by many (e.g. Amico, 2015; Applebaum, 2003; etc.) as the seminal definition of white privilege and the contextualization of this concept in an idiosyncratic list of ‘conditions’ that white privilege allows. In defining white privilege succinctly McIntosh (1989) says, “white privilege [is] an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 10). From this metaphoric image two distinct elements are noteworthy; the unearned nature of white assets and the condition that makes recognizing privilege difficult/challenging for those

that directly benefit from it. The conferment of unearned assets on white people can be codified by McIntosh's (1989) list of conditions as well as by Amico's (2015) extended discussion of specific examples (e.g. job markets, housing, environment, law enforcement/crime). What rings true in reading either of these lists of privileges is the scope and overlap that each advantage provides. No one privilege exists in isolation and all are reflective of a social perception of the individual and *not* the actual qualities of the individual (Amico, 2015). Applebaum (2003) considers that it is easier for some white people to contextualize privilege as those "rights that everyone should have or that should be based for everyone upon merit" (p. 9). This claim, while it may be good intentioned, ignores that the system that has created oppression for a marginalized group overwhelmingly benefits the oppressors by providing structures that support and reinforce their privilege (Applebaum, 2003). Further, when generally applicable 'rights' or conceptions of meritocracy are connected to the isolation of racist beliefs and actions as individual acts of radical white supremacists it allows a white person to remove themselves from personal implication in a system of oppression (hooks, 2014; Thompson, 2003; Solomona et al., 2005). This removal of implication allows the additional denial of being a recipient of privileged benefits because a white person does not see themselves as part of the larger system at work. Rather, they believe that they are not complicit in the perpetuation of that system and that the oppressive structures that sustain white privilege are not viewed as oppressive, but rather considered to be the expected, invisible, and unquestioned norm of daily life for all people (Leonardo, 2004; Solomona et al., 2005; Thompson, 2003). When viewed this way, a white person is firmly plunged into a cultural space that was created for their privilege to remain invisible.

White privilege perpetuates a ‘myth of meritocracy’ that assumes that all people are given equal chances to succeed, and that achievement is gained by those that work harder or become more intelligent (Amico, 2015). This myth persists under the entrenched belief that an individual has ultimate control over their success/failure and that there are no structural/systemic elements beyond the individual that might impede success (Amico, 2015). White privilege simultaneously denies that disadvantage could exist and actively works to hide the advantages that being white can afford someone. By placing these structures out of view, a beneficiary of the system that privileges whiteness fails to see, recognize, or understand their own privilege and is more likely to attribute achievement to individual merits. This system, while it may be more hidden to those privileged by it, is more obvious to those that are oppressed by that same system in that they suffer the effects of it constantly (Leonardo, 2004; 2013). Lipstiz (1995; 2018) terms this idea of the filtered view and invisible benefits arrangement, as the “possessive investment in whiteness” that maintains the dominating racialized social hierarchy supported by white hegemony even without specific intentional white supremacist actions (p. vii).

White Supremacy

Usage of the term white supremacy understands that in order for the invisible systems of whiteness and white privilege to exist, white racial domination must first exist (Leonardo, 2004). The larger overreaching oppressive ethos of white supremacy as an “entire political system” finds its way into the fabric of educational curriculum, governmental structures, economic policies, and/or legal proceedings, to name only a few examples (Leonardo, 2013, p. 94). This systematic entrenchment is what ultimately allows for whiteness and white privilege to invisibly replicate (Amico, 2015; Gillborn, 2014; Leonardo, 2004).

Attributing racism and racist behaviors to individual ‘white supremacists’ can be a detour of explaining a white person’s understanding of racism in a larger social context. It can be far easier to understand a racist act or idea as being unique to a deviant set of individuals; however, in the context of this dissertation, I am understanding white supremacy as the larger and much more subversive and generally invisible system that whiteness utilizes to build and keep power over non-whites. In this way, white supremacy is more than individual acts. It is a persistent system that supports all actions/ideas that seek to maintain whiteness’s centrality and control (Roediger, 2002).

The terms defined above clarify how whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy will be used within this study. Whiteness, as an invisible set of norms, works to covertly reinforce the power of being white which maintains the derived privileges of being white. White privilege functions then as an invisible set of assets that whiteness confers, and on which white people rely. And white supremacy, which is much more than overt racist actions, functions to solidify whiteness as the assumed center point of social and political agency.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this section, I explore the literature that supports and connects the theoretical frameworks of this dissertation to the methodology and methods that will be discussed in Chapter 3. I will discuss the theoretical frameworks of poststructuralism, critical whiteness studies (CWS), and mestiza consciousness including addressing some of the relevant critiques of these theories. Then, I will clarify the white identity (re)development models and link them to four pedagogical perspectives that are being used to further explore the outcomes of this research shared in Chapter 5.

Poststructuralism

Before defining poststructuralism as a theoretical framework, it is important to explain its antecedent, structuralism. Structuralist thinking suggests that society and social practices develop from and are responsive to established and seemingly fixed/immobile social structure(s). These structure(s) “exists beyond the individual” and “exerts a causal force on people” causing them to enact social, cultural, or psychological practices (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p. 400). The perception of these structures as fixed or immobile constants that are separate from the individual person makes them expressions of a socialized nature and in turn, they make people act/understand meanings in prescribed ways (Barker & Jane, 2016). Structuralists see that meaning is given to ideas through linguistic systems that, through the integration of signs, make meaning in comparison to a binary relationship. For example, the meaning of darkness is only available because of the understanding of the existence of its opposite, lightness; and vice versa (Barker & Jane, 2016). To the structuralist, the meaning of these two terms exists beyond any individual’s interpretation and represents a constant that endures across society.

Poststructuralism, by contrast, “rejects the idea of an underlying stable structure that founds meaning through fixed binary pairs (black-white; good-bad)” and sees meanings as ideas that are crafted over time and through consistent processes of understanding within not larger social structures, but within the individual (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 21). Derrida (1976), a central philosophical voice in poststructuralism, agrees with the existence of binary systems, but challenges the way in which meaning is made/re-made within the language system. He prefers to consider it one of deconstruction of meaning along the pattern of meaning creation. Therefore, a key component of poststructuralist thinking is the idea of subjectivity in which what an individual believes, feels, and understands is related to the accumulated system of one’s own

interpretations and connections to the signs used to describe and understand one's experience (Derrida, 1976). The poststructuralist still recognizes that darkness and lightness are two related qualities; however, they allow the definitions of each to not be ultimately dependent on the other and let the person experiencing each develop their subjective understanding.

Teaching and teacher education is a site for recognizing the influence that a teacher's subjectivity has on their practice given the power-laden discourse of the classroom (Daniels & Varghese, 2020). This idea suggests that teaching is not a simplistic set of actions in which one takes part. Rather, the teacher's decisions stem from their own lived experiences and/or an interpretation of others lived experiences. No pedagogical practices that a teacher takes part in can be divorced from the teacher who is enacting them, and even those elements of prescribed practice (e.g. standardized tests, state standards, or canonical works assigned) are presented by teachers who are subjective knowers whose beliefs, experiences, and/or values influence the presentation (Daniels & Varghese, 2020). For example, as a teacher educator with past experiences as a high school English Language Arts teacher, my situated knowledge of classroom practices comes from my own choices and lived experiences in the classroom. Thus, as I develop my pedagogy for future educators, I rely on my own subjective interpretations of teaching from those experiences I encountered firsthand and/or from my own interpretations of teaching moments I learned about anecdotally.

As a teacher educator, recognizing that my own subjectivity affects not only what I teach, but how I teach, supports the need to deconstruct how my subjectivity forms, evolves, and manifests itself in my pedagogy. This deconstructionist mode of considering subjective experience fits the poststructuralist's theoretical thinking as it advocates for a better understanding of the influences of power within the practice of teacher education (Daniels &

Varghese, 2019). As well, given the deeply rooted nature of whiteness and white supremacy within educational spaces and teacher education programming, a theoretical frame to better interpret and critique the subjective influence of whiteness is likewise called for (Ladson-Billings, 1998). I will next look at critical whiteness studies.

Critical Whiteness Studies

In this section, I explore the elements of critical whiteness studies (CWS) as they connect to the deconstruction of my white identity as a teacher educator. Whiteness is definable as a specific culture by its “amalgamation of various white ethnic practices” that are played out constantly across America and the globe (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32). The tools of criticism that CWS provides allows me to problematize the (in)visibility, the normativity, and the performativity of whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy to challenge racism and inequity. Matias & Mackey (2015) put this type of investigation into a medical analogy, “If racism is the symptom, then enactments of whiteness that uphold white supremacy is the disease; to cure such a disease we cannot simply apply antiracist approaches without thoroughly understanding the disease itself” (p. 34). CWS offers, to stick with Matias & Mackey’s metaphor, the language, perspective, and tools to produce the pathology of the affliction of white supremacy as it exists in my own subjective world view.

Defining Critical Whiteness Studies. Critical whiteness studies (CWS) is a theoretical frame that derives from several varied scholarly sources and a history of directed focus on whiteness to understand power in relationship to the social, cultural, and economic context in which all people live (Matias & Mackey, 2015; Stephany, 2019). Thus, the “aim [of CWS] is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege. CWS presumes a certain conception of racism that is connected to white supremacy” (Applebaum,

2016, para 2). Stephany (2019) discussed the work of CWS scholars as an “attempt to better understand the social construction of whiteness and the dominance it holds as a subject position throughout all areas of social life” (pp. 10). Matias & Mackey (2015) discuss CWS as “a transdisciplinary approach to investigate the phenomenon of whiteness, how it is manifested, exerted, defined, recycled, transmitted, and maintained, and how it ultimately impacts the state of race relations” (p. 34). Love (2019) defines CWS as, “a body of scholarship that aims to underscore how White supremacy and privilege are often invisible in society yet are still reproduced” (p. 143). Consistent in all these conceptions of CWS is the focus of the researcher’s goal to understand how whiteness functions within a historically oppressive structure of white supremacy. Then by leveraging that understanding CWS works to counteract whiteness’ effects by outlining tools for changing and challenging those conceptions (Lensmire, 2010; Matias & Mackey, 2015). Next, I will offer a brief summation of the history of CWS scholarship.

Scholars of Color and the History of CWS. The genesis of CWS does not comes from a group of ‘woke’ white scholars with intentions of toppling the white supremacist hierarchy. This theoretical frame comes from scholars of color who recognized the centrality of race to social, cultural, legal, and economic conditions following the Civil War and sought to expose and critique how whiteness came into being. Jupp et al (2016) articulate this by exploring that these scholars’ works were necessary to “complete the epistemological shift that moved race from a natural biological paradigm to a social and political one” (p. 1157). This shift did not occur overnight but took multiple years and many scholars dedicated attention to the conception of ‘race’ as not grounded in a biological difference but as a constructed social distinction to benefit selected groups over subjugated individuals (Allen, 2004; Roedigger, 1992). The scholarship and writings of Fredrick Douglas (1845/1986), W. E. DuBois (1903/1995), James

Baldwin (1963/1998), Ida B. Wells (1991), and bell hooks (1994), to name but a few, contributed to the intellectual dialogue about the understanding of race in America as it related to systems and structures of power (Jupp, et al., 2016). Although these scholars' contributions were largely ignored by the white intellectual establishment for many years, it was their work to define and articulate the properties of race as a social construct that provided the foundation for the future application and amalgamation of critical theories that address whiteness and its complicity in white supremacy (Jupp, et al., 2016).

Connection to Critical Paradigms. As CWS developed as its own scholarship, it was part of the growth of a variety of critical theories that looked at the socially constructed world of relationships of power. Due to this hybridized co-development, CWS evolved to adopt/share strategies and principles aligned and related to the disciplines of critical legal studies, critical race theory, labor history, cultural and literary studies, educational leadership and policy studies, and feminist and gender studies (Jupp et al., 2016). Through each of these disciplines, additional perspectives, and elements of the concepts of whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy were identified as topics of critique.

Roedigger (2002) asserts that one of the most crucial aspects of CWS scholarship that defines it as a critical approach is "'marking' whiteness as a particular – even peculiar, - identity, rather than as the presumed norm" (p. 21). CWS shifts the conversation about how to address racism from analyzing situations through the experiences of people of color to a critical undermining of whiteness as a problem that is explicitly for white people to address and resolve (Leonardo, 2013). CWS shares a common language with many other critical theories that facilitate the deconstruction of whiteness. However, while CWS and other critical paradigms are seeking to expose how power operates in relationship to race, who racism benefits, and how the

issues around racism are addressed, each approach differs in how their positioning focuses their views. Other concepts often consider their critique from within the experience of the racially dominated group (people of color); while CWS considers its critique from within the experience of the racially dominant group (those enacting whiteness) (Leonardo, 2013).

Having acknowledged the history and comingled elements that have produced CWS as an independent branch of scholarship, I will now describe the evolutionary phases (described as waves) of this theory.

Waves of CWS. While movements or phases within a theory's development can be problematic in suggesting clear cut boundaries or demarcations that are reductive; I concur with Jupp et al.'s (2016) clarification that describing the phases of CWS as waves deemphasizes any potential perceptions of "oppositions, binaries, or reductions" (p. 1180). The waves described below, overlap, and continue to influence and condition one-another. Identifying them in a numerical orientation serves only to organize the sequence of thought and not suggest a hierarchy or competitive relationship (Jupp et al., 2016; Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

First Wave. The publications that first identified CWS as a separate field of scholarship can be traced (as much as a movement can be assigned a specific date of conception) to the late 1980s and early 1990s (Leonardo, 2013; Jupp et al., 2016). CWS scholars (especially those concerned with white teacher identity) utilized this discourse to produce research documenting what Jupp et al. (2016) term the first wave of CWS characterized as race evasive studies that sought to "describe, substantiate, and document White teachers' evasions, resistances, and denials" of the overarching concepts of whiteness' role in socially constructed spaces (pp. 1159). Berchini (2014, 2016) and Lensmire (2010) identify that first wave CWS work focuses on what white individuals are doing as opposed to why they are doing it or the influence of the context on

their actions. If and when language is shared about how best to engage in the critique of race relative to whiteness and white privilege the conversation is structured around “help[ing] whites see themselves as racial” and by doing so allowing whites to “understand the world from ‘diverse’ perspectives” (Margolin, 2015, pp. 3). The larger critique of this initial phase of CWS regards the treatment and essentialization of the white identity (and that of white teachers) as static, independent of context, and monolithic (Barnes, 2017; Berchini, 2016; Lensmire, 2010).

Second Wave. Second wave CWS sought to respond to the critiques of the first wave by directing specific and noteworthy attention on context, performance, and the institutions that support the permanence of white supremacy (Haviland, 2008). Jupp et al.’s (2016) understanding of the move into the second wave considers four conceptual tenants as emblematic of a transition into the new phase of scholarship:

1. Second wave scholarship derives from the establishment of first wave CWS and identity work as legitimate scholarship worthy of refinement and reconceptualization.
2. A further challenging of monolithic notions of white identity that recognized the “historicized complexities of race, class, gender, and nation building” needed exploration and thinking (Jupp et al. 2016, pp. 1162).
3. A specific need to better understand the perception of completeness in the process of recognizing whiteness, white identity, and race ally-ship required further exploration (Thompson, 2003; Applebaum, 2003).
4. Theorist recognized the complexity of white identity in full relationship to and recognition of more than a binary system that can and should be further studied and scrutinized.

These elements of the second wave broadly characterized it as race-visible, in that the nature of this work views “white identity [as] complex, multi-dimensional, and both historically and spatially contingent” (Stephany, 2019, p. 11). The white race visibility perspective of this wave develops a connection between white identity and the systems of whiteness that provide advantage for white people (socially, politically, legally, etc) and are a central focus of attempting to make whiteness intentionally visible (Roediger, 2002). Second wave CWS also created more spaces for scholars (both of color and white) to challenge their own identity through internally focused analytical tools (e.g. autoethnography, personal narrative, etc) that provided more examples of self-reflection and a deconstruction of white identity (Stephany, 2019; Haviland, 2008). Twine & Gallagher (2008) recognize that in the second wave there was increased attention on “individual afflictions of the ‘white mind’, rather than [sic] the structures that reproduce racism and inequality from one generation to the next” (p. 11) and position their thinking to propose a third wave of CWS approaches.

Third Wave. Twine and Gallagher (2008) postulated the emergence of a third wave of CWS to include strategic thinking about renewed approaches to how scholars seek an understanding of race and racism within the structures that perpetuate white privilege. This thinking includes the use of evolving and “*innovative and renovative* research methodologies” (p.12, emphasis in the original), the placement of the understanding of whiteness in a post-dominant society (e.g. post-colonial, post-industrial, post-apartheid, etc), and a move toward white identity understanding (among United States scholars at least) in relationship to “immigrant and post-migration communities whose origins are in the Caribbean, Latin America, Mexico and other nations outside of Europe” (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, pp. 12-13). In Garner’s (2017) critique of Twine & Gallagher’s thinking they note that “the third wave is about juggling

the micro and the macro; about how whiteness functions in different national scenarios, and in an array of institutional and everyday contexts” (p. 1585). This “juggling the micro and macro” concept nicely articulates the third wave as an emerging development that takes the race-evasive elements of the first wave with the race visible notions of the second wave and continues the persistent task of questioning the endemic power that whiteness compels upon social structures (both private and public) through white supremacy and white privilege.

Summary of CWS and application to this study. CWS has evolved by transitioning through waves of development that are each an accumulation from other disciplines as well as continuances or departures from prior CWS considerations. CWS scholars are intentional in choosing the best concepts to address the identified subject of interest, borrowing, and adapting tools and language from various critical theories and disciplines. Matias & Mackey (2015) argue that to utilize CWS effectively it should be “a framework to deconstruct the material, physical, emotional, and political power of whiteness” and that for racially just knowledge to be complete, the white person must also match their thinking up with other critical paradigms that expose the impacts of whiteness and white supremacy on people of color (Matias & Mackey, 2015, p. 35). Matias & Mackey (2015) extend this thinking by suggesting that it is not enough to simply go through motions of “learning their own whiteness” but a white person must also place that understanding next to reality that creates “a violent condition within which people of color must racially survive” (p. 35). This suggestion notes that there is a requirement in the use of CWS to become more open to the variety of power structures that are taking place in relationship to white hegemony and thus they [the white individual] must see themselves as part of those structures (Matias, et al., 2017)

In orienting my dissertation to this theory specifically, I will be considering the third wave of CWS that is constituted by intentionally focusing on the interaction between individual understandings of white identity/consciousness in relation to a larger and more endemic social structure, in my case, my role as a white teacher educator (DiAngelo, 2011; Gallagher & Twine, 2017; Garner, 2017; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). As another facet of the third wave, I have chosen to conduct a less traditional methodology to understand and explore my white identity by employing evocative autoethnography using a poetic narrative method².

To further nuance my consideration about the emotional elements of whiteness and their relationship to CWS, I am also utilizing the theoretical concepts of the mestiza consciousness. This theory informs the process of acknowledging and illuminating the presence of white emotionality and helps me recognize the challenges to white identity development. My work intends to present an example of a reflective tool and process for white teacher educators to utilize as they undergo a similar process of engaging with their subjective experiences with emotionality related to whiteness to move further down the path in the development of a white racial identity and, therefore, do less violence to people of color (Matias & Mackey, 2015).

Mestiza Consciousness

In this section, I will turn my attention to the mestiza consciousness as an additional perspective to the process of critically looking at the blended space of emotion that influences the development of a new identity as a white teacher educator. I begin by defining and exploring Gloria Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness that was developed as part of the borderlands theory presented in her seminal genre mixing work *Borderlands, La Frontera* (1987/2012). Then, I will

² Discussion about this method as process and product is available in Chapter 3.

consider the implications of this framework as it influences my process to understand the fluid nature of identity given the multiple emotional facets of personal experience.

The *mestiza* consciousness is an integrated approach to identity development that moves past the separation of independent spheres of self into a place of mixing, overlapping, and, many times, messy clarifications of a newly formed and fluid character (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012; Feghali, 2011; Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1994). Borderlands theory, coined by Anzaldúa, concerns the physical/psychological space among her Chicana/Mexican/American identities, personal ancestry living in the border regions of Texas and Mexico, and her sexual identity as a lesbian (Cantú & Hurtado, 2012; Feghali, 2011; Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1994). Considered an expansion of Du Bois' (1903/1995) double consciousness, borderlands theory creates a “metaphor for all types of crossings” and places this theory as a method for understanding boundaries between conceptions that would otherwise appear to be mutually exclusive (Cantú & Hurtado, 2012, p. 7).

The *mestiza* consciousness, within the broader borderlands theory, seeks to make the boundary space(s) among seemingly divided identities/places/social structures more liminal. Anzaldúa (1987/2012) describes this as the “break down [of] the subject-object duality that keeps her [the *mestiza*] a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (p. 102). Yarbrow-Bejarano (1994) further explores this idea stating that “the theory of *mestiza* consciousness depends on an awareness of subject positions” that work “against the solidifying concept of a unitary or essential ‘I’” (p. 12). The goal is transcending the “solidifying” or “unitary” identity(ies) and not about a balancing or intersection of the previously held identities. *Mestiza* consciousness is about the coalescing of a third identity that is altogether new, unique, and fluidly hybrid (Hernandez, 2020). Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) explication of this goal and the process to work toward it are organized within the context of her

own experiences with borderland cultures³. She articulates that as a mestiza herself, she has “no country” while simultaneously belonging to “all countries” (p. 102). Within that context the mestiza’s survival, in and among the overlapping oppressed groups, is due to a necessary hybridity (using a metaphoric description of corn) that she has been required to employ to navigate multiple and contradictory memberships (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994). It is through this navigation of the crowded mixture of various cultural intentions that the mestiza has gained the tools to produce a new consciousness (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994).

Anzaldúa (1987/2012) crafts several steps along this fluid path that are mirrored in the organization of the chapters of *Borderlands: La Frontera* (Feghali, 2011). First, the mestiza must “take inventory” of the history and “baggage” that is “inherit[ed] from her ancestors” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 104). Next, this backstory is put “through a sieve” in order that the “lies” that the *mestiza* has been a part of/party to can be critically addressed (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 104). After recognition, comes the communication of the “rupture” that is a documentation of the struggle to understand the connection of the lies to her lived experiences/past and in so doing she “documents the struggle” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 104). Lastly, although this process is in constant (re)authorship and never ending, the mestiza can use the clarity gained through the earlier steps and she “reinterprets history, and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths” that compel her “to transform the small ‘I’ into the total Self” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 104 & 105). Henríquez-Betancor (2012) helps understand the nature of this process by adding more context, describing it as one that is a “deeply considered emotional and psychic progression through a fluid experience of a range of issues” acknowledging that the process is ongoing and potentially

³ Anzaldúa cites that her specific identifications as a lesbian Chicana woman who grew up on the physical border between Texas and Mexico within migrant worker’s communities on the psychological border between their home culture and American culture and between indigenous religious traditions and Catholicism provides the context of the varied cultures she finds herself among.

fraught with internal conflict(s) (p. 45). As the medium in which this conflict plays out, Anzaldúa situates writing and the interactive space of language as appropriate. It is through writing as a practice of “discursive self-formation” that the author “constructs a consciousness of difference” (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994, p. 13).

In further analyzing the outcomes associated with the steps outlined above, it is important to see how the individual, the mestiza, and the consciousness interact. Richard Johnson (1986) notes that “consciousness embraces the notion of a consciousness of self and an *active mental and moral self-production*” (p. 44, emphasis in the original). When this idea is linked to the fluid system outlined by Anzaldúa, it helps understand part of the overall goal. Mestiza consciousness development is more about the process that is undertaken than an arrival at an outcome; one does not become the conscious mestiza, but rather one is made while embarking through mestiza consciousness. Yarbro-Bejarano (1994) extends this thinking by understanding this developmental experience as a distinctly postmodern consciousness formation process given the belief that an “awareness that *all* identity is constructed across difference and the necessity of a new *politics* of difference to accompany this new sense of self” (p. 11, emphasis in original). Therefore, the consciousness that characterizes this process is not strictly a singular/private one but exists across differences or as Hall (1987) might frame it, it becomes “‘unities’-in-difference” that are privately and publicly situated (p. 45). Anzaldúa (1987/2012) brings the mestiza consciousness out into the public space by noting that, “nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads” (p. 109).

Problems and Practical Applications of Theoretical Frameworks

Having explored the defining features and theoretical developments of CWS and the mestiza consciousness, I will now explore how these frameworks will be utilized together to

develop and guide this research. First, I will discuss two areas of potential conflict that exist in the application of these theories. Second, I will articulate how I intend to “set them alongside” one another in order to overcome these pitfalls (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994, p. 9).

The Trouble with CWS: (Re)Centering Whiteness. Leonardo (2013) identifies one of the largest critiques of CWS scholarship when noting that “Whites enjoy a monopoly over many social processes from the means of production to the production of meaning, [therefore] it is difficult for people of color to imagine or accept a race movement led by Whites or their racial imagination” (p. 101). The challenge is that whiteness will always find a way to center itself in a discussion regarding race while simultaneously sending already marginalized voices further into the periphery (Leonardo, 2013; Love, 2019). Warren (1999) makes this bold statement about the role of CWS work in relationship to this critique, “Rather than making the center bigger, including more voices and more cultures, whiteness studies demands a critical examination of the center in the hope that the center will fall apart” (p. 197). This statement of purpose presents with it a paradox; how can the specific and intentional study of whiteness not re-center whiteness in the debate? Stephany (2019) articulates this concern well:

The conundrum whites face in declaring their whiteness, as well as their sincere aversion to racism and white privilege, is that the declaration itself puts race, racism, and privilege at the center of the conversation. The consequence is that race talk within whiteness discourse becomes a vicious circle, where racism and oppression are never fully overcome. (pp. 11-12)

The inscription of race and the questions around who is privileged to talk about whiteness and race is central to Leonardo’s (2013) contention that whiteness studies “is driven by the commitment that *racism is ultimately a White problem*” (pp. 104, emphasis in the original). The

criticism of CWS follows from this sentiment that by placing whiteness at the center of the solution, by virtue of focused attention, it is now the center point of the research and excludes attentive scrutiny of racism and/or racist systems linked to whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege. This critique of (re)centering on the white person at the expense of seeing the situation of the dominated other is raised as yet another example of the normalized/invisible sense of entitlement that is part of the everyday benefit of white privilege (Leonardo, 2002; McIntosh, 1988; Solomona et al., 2005).

Leonardo (2013) argues that in order for CWS to generate any measure of meaningful change regarding racism it can and should put whiteness “in an atypical, even uncomfortable position. It puts Whiteness on trial without indicting White people as individual embodiments of an ideology called Whiteness” (p. 106). This view disconnects white people from whiteness so that what the critical work of CWS looks at it is the systems, practices, and underlying structures of whiteness and not the individual participants themselves (Leonardo, 2013). In disconnecting the individual and the systems of whiteness, Leonardo (2013) presents a meaningful shift in CWS thinking that allows for a dislocation, but not an absolution, of a person from the ideology of whiteness.

Furthering the critique around the (re)centering of whiteness are the trappings of emotionality that can accompany revelations of white privilege and the challenges of accepting complicity in a white supremacist system (Matias, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2015; Matias et al. 2017; Solomona et al., 2005). In the adoption of a disassociation between the white person and whiteness it is possible, and likely, that the emotions of anger, pity, shame, fear, guilt, etc. can become prevalent in a white person in CWS work (Matias, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2015). The emotions, and by proxy the person showing them, become the center of the attention and “serve

to reinscribe whiteness as the normative centre [sic] for discussion while continuing to marginalize other social groups” (Solomona et al., 2005, p. 166). In considering the tone or intention of this type of scholarship, Leonardo (2013) notes that “white confessionals are helpful insofar as they represent a discursive strategy to recognize the insidiousness of structural privileges” (p. 141). The further critique of work in this realm is the self-glorifying goal of a white person to undergo a process of self-discovery to become recognized as a “good” white person who only reluctantly benefits from their white privileges (Helms, 2017 & 2020; Patton & Bondi, 2015).

The Appropriation of Mestiza Consciousness. As a member of an oppressive group⁴ I, in numerous ways, have had a very different lived experience from that of Anzaldúa and therefore I cannot, will not, and do not intend to take on the role of the “new mestiza” that her writing outlines. Any associations I draw between the experiences of those marginalized and terrorized by the oppressive structures of racism, homophobia, anti-immigrant-ism, or misogyny and my lived experiences as a beneficiary of multiple privileges would at best be considered appropriation and at worst a reapplication of dominance and oppression. In response to these concerns, I look to a direct assertion from Anzaldúa (1987/2012) herself, “Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. By taking back your collective shadow the intracultural split will heal” (p. 108). In the process to arrive at this new consciousness and address the “doppelganger” that casts its divisive “shadow”, I see the means to, not adopt the identity of the mestiza, but rather engage in the emotionally oriented and fluid connection with my own private and public identities. In practice to fully participate in the process of consciousness development that produces the “third element” that is a result of a “breaking down [of] the unitary aspect of each

⁴ See my statement of subjectivity in Chapter 1.

new paradigm” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 102). Elenes (2001) sees this consciousness element as a help to “all-Chicana/os and non-Chicana/os [to] learn to deal with differences in a productive way... this methodology [mestiza consciousness] offers ways in which we can all bring our different, contradictory, and oppositional points of view for discussion” (p. 351). I consider Kaplan’s (1990) and Yarbrow-Bejarano’s (1994) conceptual understanding that a way to avoid emulation and appropriation consists of setting the theoretical model to be used “alongside metaphors garnered from the rigorous examination of one’s own lived personal and collective history” (Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1994, p. 9).

Setting ‘Along Side’ CWS and Mestizas Consciousness. As a white person utilizing CWS and mestiza consciousness within this study I seek to address these two critiques by setting them “alongside” each other. By placing the very intentional and direct decentering positionality of CWS next to the emotionally forward nature of the steps toward mestiza consciousness, I am more able to respond from an awareness of the conflicted and dueling nature of my own experience that nuances my subjective response.

Kendi (2019) argues that white people suffer from a sense of dueling consciousness regarding their white identity; however, I would condition it a little differently for white individuals that are specifically seeking to better understand their own white identity through CWS and mestiza consciousness. Kendi (2019) posits that the conflict is among, assimilationist, segregationist, and antiracist viewpoints (p. 31). In my experiences to understand my own whiteness and white privilege, my duel is among, not necessarily the viewpoint I ascribe/aspire to, but rather my current complicity in a white supremacist structure, my unrequested status as a beneficiary (white privilege) of that structure, and how I am able to change to challenge and dismantle that structure. From my privileged role as a teacher educator, my dueling

consciousness is experienced as a positionality that exists among conflicting poles of white identity and the daily enactments of whiteness that are put into practice in my pedagogical choices. CWS and the mestiza consciousness both serve as powerful theoretical frames for this navigation of my experience of traversing the conflicted space in which identities are recognizable, emotions and trauma are visible, and the borders between ideals, realities, and desires are consistently (re)crossed.

In CWS scholarship, defining, understanding, troubling, and making real the ways in which whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy exist is paramount. Within these constructs, I can use the critical lens to identify and name those elements of my experience that align me and my actions with whiteness as a normative practice of society. Then, by vividly making clear how I have benefited from these privileges my understanding of the inner workings of white privilege and white supremacist systems provides me better clarity to identify ways to interrupt these systems.

In the evocative autoethnography⁵ I present in Chapter 4, recognizing and analyzing my experience within CWS's emergent third wave provides me with the language to better place my findings in the larger systemic debate about the hegemonic persistence of whiteness (Twine & Gallagher, 2008). I position my work in the third wave of whiteness studies as I am engaging with the personal impacts of the structural systems of white supremacy within teacher education as well as utilizing a poststructuralist understanding of the subjective self in relation to those systems of power within an evocative autoethnographic methodology (Furman, 2007). Garner (2017) articulates that placement in the third wave of CWS requires "the scholar of whiteness" to address "the question of how to wrestle its meanings into connection with other social

⁵ See Chapter 3 for more details.

relationships,” in effect they should, “always [be] asking yourself, ‘what’s the point of this?’ and remaining true to the first wave origin: make white supremacy visible” (p. 1585). In using CWS as a framework to express how whiteness is embedded in all that I do, I can craft an evocative response to the rhetorical question, “what’s the point of this?” by naming and making clear where white supremacy is visible in my practice as a teacher educator through the subjective and existential space that poetry allows (Furman, 2007). This will undoubtedly be a process fraught with the emotional trappings of whiteness that CWS scholars such as Matias (2016) have spent a career seeking to expose. As Love (2019) notes “White folx cannot be coconspirators [with people of color] until they deal with the emotionality of being White” (p. 144). Therefore, I turn to Anzaldúa’s thinking in the *mestiza* consciousness as a guide to better orient my capacity to engage, while not denying, the emotional elements that are an undeniable part of my whiteness.

Anzaldúa’s (1987/2012) articulation of the steps toward the development of the third consciousness through the process of recognition and encountering of the emotions that engender its creation provides a structure for my interrogation of my own whiteness. Henríquez-Betancor (2012) defines Anzaldúa’s developed consciousness as “a structural process of change in which the acceptance of cultural and personal problems, the meeting and intermixing of different groups ..., and the possibility of reconciliation with the white society conflate in a linear and non-linear fashion” (p. 47). These three elements of acceptance, engagement, and reconciliation in an emotionally forward fluidity of process provide the lens through which I can articulate and investigate the appraisal of my whiteness as it impacts my emotions and the inner workings of my identity that is portrayed in my teacher education classroom.

Analyzing my identity development in the framing and terminology of Anzaldúa’s consciousness provides the vulnerable space to address the emotions related to my understanding

of whiteness (as Matias & Mackey, 2015 and Matias et al. 2017 recommend) in a productive and growth-oriented way that works at not (re)centering whiteness, but rather focusing on the process of becoming a racially aware white person. Yarbrow-Bejarano (1994) contends that “this process, constantly ‘breaking down the unitary aspect’ of each previous textual moment, leaves no home but the discursive production of consciousness itself, a consciousness linked with political activity.” (p. 24). Therefore, through poetic narrative writing, I will be able to work toward the “discursive self-formation” that Anzaldúa uses as a tool that “constructs a *consciousness* of difference” (Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1994, p. 13, emphasis in the original). This crafting process is one of fluid reflection and analysis that is guided by a constant recognition of my role as a member of the white supremacist system. This reflection is the necessary and real reminder needed to move my writing from an emotionally centric memoir that is only self-glorifying/self-flagellating to a politically active argument that works to dismantle white supremacy.

Identity (Re)Development

In this section, I will discuss Helms’ (2020) white identity development model and Howard’s (2016) white identity orientations that help explore the concept of white identity (re)formation. To better organize my own understanding of this transformative process, I will be using both of these (re)formations of white identity because, while they share many features, they also offer two differing paradigmatic outcomes that more richly nuance the process I am undertaking. Howard (2019) suggests that the goal for the white person on this journey “of racial identity development is not to un-become white but rather to transform our selves, and hopefully others, the meaning of being White” (p. 118). With this goal in mind Helms’ (2020) and Howard’s (2016) white identity model/orientations help identify and position behaviors/experiences that contribute to this process. After discussing the nuances of these two

paths I will also connect them with four pedagogical approaches that can help explore the choices that interrupt whiteness within the power laden practice of teacher education.

In addressing these processes of identity development, I have elected to use the term (re)formation to better express the poststructuralist concept that identity, as it is being used here, is “a new mythos - that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave” (Anzaldúa 1987/2012, p. 102). As such, I have an identity that has already undergone a formation that cannot be denied; however, I am exposing how my identity formation is changing repeatedly (re: prefix for again) over the course of the poetic narrative autoethnography presented in Chapter 4.

Helms’ White Identity Development Schemas

Helms’ (1990) orients the goal of “positive White racial identity” progress as consisting “of two processes, the abandonment of racism and the development of a non-racist White identity” (p. 49). In service of these two aims, Helms (2020) crafts the model of this theory around two phases that are each “hypothesized to consist of three schemas” (p. 25). Each schema is not mutually exclusive nor are the phases or schemas/stages encountered as singularities, in that a white person may move from position to position relative to varied situations or circumstances throughout their experiences (Helms, 1990, 2020; Howard, 2016; Tatum, 1994).

Internalizing racism is the first phase of Helms’ (2020) model, and it consists of the schemas of contact, disintegration, and reintegration (p. 26)⁶. The contact schema is characterized by a person’s appearance as “a vulnerable child with respect to racial issues” (Helms, 2020, p. 35). In this phase, the white person claims a colorblind race related attitude and,

⁶ While it is not stated as a separate phase or schema by Helms (2020), Howard (2020) and Kivel (2017) explore the precontact phase as preceding the contact schema and identify it as a state of ignorance about or outright denial of whiteness as an identity construct.

while acknowledging the existence of racial groups that are not white, feels that genuine interactions with and acceptance within those ‘other’ groups is achievable with surface level behavioral change (e.g. adopting slang words or clothing associated with the ‘other’ group). The second stage is disintegration that consists of confusion around the “moral dilemma” of coming to terms with the conscious and intentional understanding that one is white and that with that designation “certain benefits accrue” (Helms, 2020, p. 27). Common to individuals at this stage are behaviors and feelings around meritocracy, concerns with alienation from other white people, as well as a sense of cognitive dissonance that can manifest itself in seeking actions to interrupt racism that still provide security within whiteness (Helms, 2020; Tatum, 1994). The third and final stage of the internalizing racism phase of Helms’ model is reintegration. In this stage, the white person who has become aware of their whiteness and the sociopolitical ramifications of that status opts for “displacement or scapegoating” in which they alleviate the conflict and pain surrounding the realization that they may be unintentionally acting immorally by casting blame on people of color (Helms, 2020, p. 28). Without direct cause the reintegration stage can be a cognitively safe position for the white person to adopt and operationalize in their daily practices as the entrenched beliefs about white superiority supports and reinforces the invisible norms of white hegemony (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016).

The second phase of Helms white identity model begins in the pseudo-independence schema that positions the white person in a continuation of the disintegration schema’s acknowledgment of their complicity in white hegemony, but not yet fully coming to terms with their own personal responsibility for white supremacy or racism. At this stage, complicity is experienced in an academic rather than personal orientation. Thus, the pseudo-independent white person seeks actions that, simultaneously, attempt to “recapture morality” lost in considering

their complicity with racism while also developing a status as a “good” white advocate as distinctive from a “bad”, typified as flagrantly racist, white person (Helms, 2020, p. 52 & 53). Helms (2020) identifies here an elevated sense of altruism that is accompanied by behaviors that exist as self-protective to the fragile sensibilities of the white identity in development while still allowing the white person to feel as though they have helped the member of the oppressed group. The immersion/emersion schema comes next and posits that the white person is now both fundamentally aware of their whiteness as well as the privileges and power that comes with it. In this realization the white person invests in and understands the need for “active exploration of racism, White culture, and assimilation and acculturation of White people” (Helms, 2020, p. 29). It is in this stage, that finding communion with other white individuals seeking to understand themselves as white can benefit the feeling of isolation and self-criticism that can accompany the deeper levels of analysis that exist. Finally, Helms (2020) places the last schema of the white identity development as autonomy, an orientation that has as its mainstay the white person who “feels safe and secure within oneself when he or she engages in experiences to nurture her or his Whiteness as personally defined” (p. 29). Helms (2020) is echoed by Tatum (1994) in pointing out that although the autonomy schema is positioned as the final stage of this model it is not a stopping place, but one that requires consistent revisiting and reassessment.

Howard’s White Identity Orientations

Howard (2016) shares a framework for considering white identity that looks at three orientations that are each linked to three specific “modalities of growth” that are further distinguishable by sets of more specific indicators (p. 104). These orientations, similar to Helms’ (2020) model described above, seek to show interacting and overlapping stages in order to

“facilitate and encourage the process of growth toward greater cultural competence among White educators” (Howard, 2016, p. 106).

The first of the orientations Howard (2016) puts forth is the fundamentalist white identity. This white person operates from a thinking modality that is fixed on the intractable belief that whiteness is right and people of color should assimilate to white ways of acting. In some cases, colorblind attitudes present beliefs in a race-less social structure that supports a meritocratic understanding of social mobility. Emotionally, fundamentalist white individuals respond with fixed and entrenched ties to white supremacy that, when confronted with a challenge to that supremacist stance, can result in hostile verbal or physical actions. These actions are in support of the “autocratic and monocultural defense of business-as-usual” that maintains white hegemony (Howard, 2016, p. 108).

The second orientation Howard (2016) explains is the integrationist white identity. Couched in white liberalist thinking, this orientation positions the white person to cognitively acknowledge and adopt language that recognizes that racism and white privilege exist; however, they still have not yet fully adopted that thinking into their socially aware understandings. Howard places the ‘white savior mentality’ in this orientation as the integrationist feels that their role is to help people of color who are less fortunate. The recognition of the power dynamic that exists is only skin deep and, in acts seeking to protect feelings of discomfort, the white person in this orientation deflects personal responsibility through emotionality or blind concepts of being a ‘good’ white person. While the integrationist sees and conceptualizes racism, understands what white privilege is and how it operates, and is genuinely interested in learning about the cultural other, their thinking, feeling, and actions are still, whether implicitly or explicitly, characterized by a binary understanding of themselves as separate from the other.

The third orientation that Howard (2016) recognizes is the transformationist white identity. Thinking within this identity is one of comfort with and enjoyment in the possibilities of the “dynamic process that is continually shifting in the context of diverse cultural perspectives” (Howard, 2016, p. 113). The result of this process is the willingness to commit to consistent reevaluation of and seeking a response to the personalized understanding of whiteness through “more self-reflective, authentic, and antiracist” thinking and critical evaluation (p. 113). In this orientation the white person has a positive connection with their white identity that is enhanced by new experiences with diverse cultures “guided by empathy and respect” for people from a variety of walks of life and points along the process of identity development (p. 114). In behavior, the transformationist white person is active in their pursuit to dislodge and break down entrenched systems, structures, and thinking that support white supremacy. Undertaking this behavior continues in an ongoing process of learning and seeking new insights from and with people of other cultures and experiences to reexamine and refine practices and actions that influence and/or affect other people with which they interact. Howard (2016) is purposeful in noting that this orientation is not to be lauded as a romantic and pedestaled location, but more of a fluid condition of the self that requires work and attention, as well as humility and grace, as, “there is no end point in the journey and perfection is certainly not the goal” (p. 116).

Pedagogical Perspectives

As this study is looking at white identity development within a teacher educator considering the influence of that identity on the subjective determination of pedagogical perspectives is imperative. The teaching of future educators will have a lasting influence on their future teaching decisions the way in which I define and operationalize my own teaching is important to explore (Berchini, 2014; Daniels & Varghese, 2019). Therefore, a working history

and definition of antiracist, white abolitionism, race accomplice/coconspirator, and race allyship pedagogical principles will be explored to better position the analysis of my autoethnography.

Antiracist Pedagogy

Kendi (2019) defines the individual antiracist by identifying it in relationship to its antithesis, a racist individual, “The opposite of ‘racist’ isn’t ‘not racist.’ It is ‘anti-racist.’ What’s the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as racist, or racial equality as an antiracist” (p. 9). Put another way, Kendi (2019) clarifies the concept of the anti-racist as “one who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity” (p. 24). Expanding these concepts into the strategic and systematic act of teaching offers this succinct and direct, definition of antiracist pedagogy: a strategy of teaching that works to encounter racism directly and then actively change it in order to dismantle it (Case & Hemmings, 2005; DiAngelo, 2011; Sefa Dei, 1996; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). The process and procedures involved in this practice acknowledge the “historic, contemporary, institutional, and systemic ways in which racism contributes to oppression” and provide the educator the perspective from which to embed, within their teaching, active resistance to white supremacy (Knowles & Hawkman, 2020, p. 245; Sefa Dei, 1995; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004).

Sleeter & Bernal (2004) consider the origins of antiracist teaching to be a varied collection of responses to/implications for multicultural education made distinct by geographic and political differences (e.g. they cite stark differences between Canadian and British reactions). In locating the origin of antiracist teaching practices, Sleeter & Bernal (2004) point out some of the most salient features that antiracism and antiracist pedagogy embodies: “(a) directs attention specifically to challenging racism in education; (b) addresses racist school structures such as

tracking, ... (c) situates culture within power relationships; (d) connects school with community; and (e) problematizes Whiteness” (p. 250). By adopting these aspects of the antiracist pedagogy, a teacher is an active agent in two realms: supporting their students’ capacity to see and respond to systemic racism both within and outside the school (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Knowles & Hawkman, 2020) and considering their own destabilized position of authority as part of the racially inequitable structure that is the education system (Thompson, 2003). Thus, an antiracist pedagogy is “based on the truth that racial groups are equals in all the ways they are different” (Kendi, 2019, p. 31) and contests the invisible exclusivity of whiteness that is seen as normal in schools of education and in generalized educational practices (Titone, 1998). Further this pedagogical stance challenges the individual teacher to decenter whiteness from their own practices as they must be aware of and honest about the hegemonic implications of white supremacy and white privilege (Matias & Mackey, 2015). Thompson (2003) offers a comment about anti-racism that further clarifies some of the implications for those taking on this pedagogical practice:

The very status of antiracism *as* anti- means that those of us who want to confront and challenge racism in ourselves, in institutions, and in others, can never forget race or racism but also cannot be trapped by it; we cannot allow it to be reified as meaningful in the particular ways we have learned to understand it. (emphasis in the original, p. 24)

This layered nature of the antiracist pedagogy exemplifies the necessity of the teacher who employs it to be deeply reflective about their practices while being emotionally resilient to the potential burdens of destabilizing whiteness (Matias & Mackey, 2015).

White Abolitionist Pedagogy

Leonardo (2013) places the white abolitionist approach to racial reconciliation as a dismantling of whiteness akin to “razing the machine to the ground altogether” (p. 105). Associated intimately with the concept of ‘race traitor’, white abolitionist thinking suggests that “there is nothing to be gained by rearticulating whiteness” and preferences conceptualizing actions in terms of white race traitors who “participate in the un-making of whiteness and the remaking of race treason” (Moon & Flores, 2000, p. 101). Under the abolitionist concept, white individuals acting as traitors to whiteness perform actions as agents of treason to “break with white racial bonding” and act in “anti-statist or anti-capitalist” ways (Preston & Chadderton, 2012, p. 87-88). These behaviors are intended to disrupt systems that are viewed as perpetrating white hegemony from within the capitalistic infrastructure (Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997). Although it is not intentional within this perspective to idealize specific white abolitionist agents, Moon & Flores (2000) show that white abolitionists have deified individual “white men who have directly taken matters into their own hands” in the challenge of dismantling white normative behavior (p. 104). Showcasing historic (e.g. John Brown) and fictional (e.g. Huck Finn) characters as those who are willing to risk their privileges, freedoms, and safety in pursuit of dismantling the precepts of whiteness, abolitionists seek to enlist more race traitors eager to adopt similar positions and tactics (Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997; Moon & Flores, 2000). The abolitionist’s long-term effort to dismantle whiteness is dependent upon gaining enough white ‘race traitors’ willing to reject the affordances they are granted by white privilege to challenge and unbalance the thinking of those in established power (the state) thereby forcing the white supremacist system to fold completely (Chubback, 2004; Cole 2012; Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997).

Love (2019) terms “abolitionist teaching” as “the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (p. 2). In placing this thinking into school spaces specifically, Love (2019) adds to the original theoretical framing of the abolitionist scholars (e.g. Garvey & Ignatiev, 1996) the context of the teacher’s role as the willing traitor to white privilege by advocating that it is incumbent upon this activist teacher, “to be accountable for the pain we [teachers] have caused others, to restore justice, and call into question our liberal politics” (p. 122). Love (2019) characterizes the actions of the abolitionist teacher by echoing the language that Garvey & Ignatiev (1997) use, saying that part of the teacher abolitionist’s role is to resist those institutional structures that perpetuate the oppressive practices of whiteness such as the tracking of students in academic settings, zero tolerance disciplinary systems, and the mechanisms of the school to prison pipeline.

The motto of the *Race Traitor*, the journal of New Abolitionism that houses the scaffolding of white abolitionist thinking, is “treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity” (Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997, p. 105). This statement’s ethos is echoed in the classroom setting by Love’s (2019) admission that “abolitionist teaching is choosing to engage in the struggle for educational justice knowing that you have the ability and human right to refuse oppression and refuse to oppress others, mainly your students” (p. 11). The pedagogical choices that are emblematic of the abolitionist teacher are those that have equitable freedom as their ultimate goal, that is the “freedom to create your reality, where uplifting humanity is at the center of all decisions” (Love, 2019, p. 89). In thinking about the role that the understanding of whiteness plays in abolitionist teaching, Leonardo (2013) considers that “teachers and students work

together to name, reflect on, and dismantle discourses of whiteness. This does not mean dismantling white people ... But it does mean disrupting white discourses and unsettling their codes” (p. 31). Echoing this concept of disruption is Love (2019) calling attention to the invisible but centrist character of whiteness and notes that once whiteness is admitted to abolitionist teaching, it “will never allow true solidarity to take place” (p. 159).

Race Accomplice/Coconspirator Pedagogy

The conceptualization of the race accomplice/co-conspirator is a growing and relatively new developing model credited to the work of Love (2019) and closely aligned to the abolitionist movement in epistemology and ontology. According to Harden & Harden-Moore (2019) to be a race accomplice, “one must be willing to do more than listen; they must be willing to stand with those who are being attacked, excluded or otherwise mistreated, even if that means suffering personal or professional backlash” (p. 32). Love (2019) associates race accomplices with the term “co-conspirators” noting that this role in resisting racism comes from the worthwhile but difficult work of “serious critique and reflection of one’s sociocultural heritage – which includes identities related to race, ethnicity, family structure, sexuality, class, abilities, and religion – taken side by side with a critical analysis of racism, sexism, White supremacy, and Whiteness” (p. 118). These definitions frame the work of the race accomplice as one who does more than say they advocate for racial justice or antiracism, more than just the performative act of showing up and being physically present (Edwards, 2020). The race accomplice is one who diligently acts upon the need for racial justice; despite the risk to their own professional credibility, financial well-being, or in some cases, physical well-being (Edwards, 2020; Harden & Harden-Moore, 2019; Love, 2019).

In application within the classroom setting, Love (2019) suggests that placing oneself as coconspirator is but one part of the ongoing process of the race abolitionist movement; however, it is not clear where along the pathway the line is to be drawn between the two. Helpfully, Edwards (2020) offers a framework of thinking around the application of the allyship/coconspirator/accomplice integration for Christian social justice activists working to support religious minorities that can offer some guidance in this thinking.⁷ Edwards (2020) work is oriented at developing solidarity with the minoritized group and culminates in the accomplice/coconspirator status; however, they are intentional in noting that this thinking is not about achievement of an “ideology, states of being, or badge that someone can earn by completing a set of tasks” (p. 8). Rather, Edwards’ (2020) six points offer guidance regarding the active process in thinking for the accomplice/coconspirator as they work to challenge the dominant culture. When applied to pedagogical thinking this process-oriented approach helps directly challenge the oppressive structures that have created the supremacist leaning of the educational space. Edwards’ (2020) points are:

- (a) solidarity is a process not an ideology, (b) systemic issues should be centered,
- (c) focus on movement building and political struggle, (d) form relationships based on shared strength, not on shared victimization, (e) recognize the possibility of doing harm; have a plan to minimize it, and (f) be destructive, be an accomplice and coconspirator. (p. 7).

These points offer a framework for a teacher to operationalize accomplice/coconspirator work within the classroom in that they guide thinking about both the power and influence

⁷ Edwards’ (2020) defining of all three of these terminologies as interrelated speaks to the close relationship among these concepts. I offer this framework for all three as a means of transition among these pedagogies, and will address and define allyship in more detail in the next section.

wielded in the educational space as well as the internal considerations that accomplice/coconspirator work can have. In echoing Love's (2019) views that accomplice/coconspirator thinking and practice is about meaningful relationships, risking of privileged statuses, and non-emotionally driven action, Edwards' (2020) points provide teachers with a process focused way to consider their classroom decisions. One point of distinction is also made clear in this process orientation – accomplice/coconspirator work is not, nor should not be, conflated with race allyship; which I will turn to next.

Race Ally Pedagogy

The definition of allyship is a contested one given thinking about what allies are, should be, and, in practice, become. I will address this topic by first defining what is understood as the ideal of this positioning and then I will consider the criticisms of allyship thinking. Cochran-Smith (1995) defines the race ally as one who is, “becoming sensitive to issues of race from the perspectives other than our own and working actively with others to promote not simply *not*-racist, but *anti*-racist educational views and practices” (p. 567). Broido (2000) places the emergence of the term ally in relationship to oppressed groups in the early 1990s specifically regarding “heterosexuals working as advocates on lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues and White students addressing racism” (p. 3). In a sweeping review of the available literature around ally considerations within social justice work on college campuses, Brodio (2000) linked participation to group affinity/inclusion, “higher moral reasoning and epistemological development” relative to altruism, and the availability to engage in activist events/with like-minded people (p. 4). Consistent with these thematic ideas, Broido & Reason (2005) further orient the ally by understanding how the individual can be positioned to question oppressive systems and structures in which they exist.

While there are many models to develop the ally, Bishop's (2002, 2015) thinking was cited numerous times in the material reviewed. Campbell (2016) offers this summation of Bishop's six-step process (a) "understanding oppression," (b) becoming "enlightened about different forms of oppression," (c) adopting oppressive structures as part of one's consciousness and developing a healing practice for that potentially harsh reality, (d) self-liberation from personal forms of oppression, (e) becoming an ally and participating "in actions that show solidarity towards" oppressed individuals, and (f) "maintaining hopefulness [that] the situation will improve" (p. 33). Campbell (2016) and Bishop (2002, 2015), among others, are quick to point out that the process of becoming an ally is neither, quick, easy, comfortable, nor finite. In various ways, it is a recursive process in which the person involved is constantly checking in on themselves and reframing/reforming their behaviors accordingly.

Much in the same way that Bishop's (2002, 2015) six-step process began with understanding oppressive structures, so does Tatum's (1994) orientation around the role of the teacher as race ally. Tatum (1994) defines this role as one of, "speak[ing] up against systems of oppression, and to challenge other whites to do the same" (p. 474). In directing what the race ally educator teaches, Tatum (1994) also presents guidance,

Teaching about racism needs to shift from an exploration of the experiences of victims and victimizers to that of empowered people of color and their white allies, creating the possibility of working together as partners in the establishment of a more just society. (p. 474)

Titone (1998) helps clarify this position by articulating the knowledges that the white teacher ally should work to achieve in order to best enact this pedagogical approach.

- Knowledge of self. This thinking is relative to the teacher's own culture and the potential role they play "in the perpetuation of oppression" (Titone, 1998, p. 172)
- Knowledge of the other. The ally teacher is able to recognize the current experiences of members of oppressed groups and use that thinking to consider the implications of their teaching practices and content. (Titone, 1998)
- Knowledge of how to take action and to lead. An intimate understanding of the systems of education allows the ally teacher to navigate and operate within the already established "professional setting" of schooling. (Titone, 1998, p. 172)

While Bishop's (2002, 2015) and Titone's (1998) concepts overlap greatly they also begin to expose some criticisms that are leveled against the white ally mentality. Desnoyers-Colas (2019) argue that what allies should be, are those that "actively help marginalized and oppressed peoples accomplish the work of obtaining equity and bringing about diversity and inclusion by taking an active part in it. Don't just talk about it, *be* about it" (p. 104, emphasis in the original). While both Bishop's and Titone's processes have steps that include the conceptualization of action, Bishop's (2002, 2015) step "e" and Titone's (1998) third knowledge category, both stop short of directing action that goes to the depth of identity shifting that Desnoyers-Colas (2019) argues.

Helms (2017) positions white allyship in general social functioning, not necessarily education, as "a pseudo independent or 'White liberal' style of negotiating or avoiding acknowledgement of the omnipresence of Whiteness" (p. 721). Further, Helms (2017) considers that this method of thinking about the racialized other places a duality into whiteness that is self-protective by determining that there are 'good' white people who are allies and 'bad' white people who are racists. This critique of race ally work and white ally pedagogy is further

explored from the principles of interest convergence and whiteness as property (Harris, 1993; Patton & Bondi, 2015). The critique argues that the white ally is privileged in their goals to be considered a ‘good’ white person and adopts the position of allyship only when and if there is some advantage for themselves in the practice (Bell, 1980; Harris, 1993, Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Thompson, 2003). Love (2019) articulates this critique well:

allies do not have to love dark people, question their privilege, decenter their voice, build meaningful relationships with folx working in the struggle, take risks, or be in solidarity with others. They just have to show up and mark the box present; thus, ally-ship is performative or self-glorifying. (p. 117)

This self-glorifying argument aligns with discussions about the impact of colorblind race attitudes on teacher’s perceptions (Solomona et al., 2005) and the white savior teacher mythos popularized in mass media representations of white teachers going into schools of predominantly students of color as benevolent allies who are the center of the narrative’s attention (Camarota, 2011).

In articulating the complications of being an ally, Patton & Bondi (2015) consider that the ally “must continually be reflexive about their positionality” as the relationship of the ally as a member of the oppressive group with those oppressed is still very much present despite their intentions (p. 510). The ally should take into consideration and be reflective about the oppressive behaviors that are common hallmarks of whiteness, white privilege, and the enactments of white supremacy in situations in which they find themselves. In an idealized way, Anzaldúa (1987/2012) defines white ally ship by saying that, “they [white people] will come to see that they are not helping us [people of color] but following our lead” (p. 107). Campbell (2016) and Brown (2002) present the caution that the white ally must be aware of their interactions and the

unintended consequences of acting in a way that (re)centers themselves or their agendas and enacts again the oppressive structures that they espouse to be against. Desnoyers-Colas (2019) offers one additional consideration about white allyship that is both critical of the thinking while suggesting a reflective point of view that could counteract the pitfalls they identify, “being an ally means being willing to walk away from one's privilege in order to use one's social dominance to help those who are marginalized. ... you don't get a cookie for being moral, social justice oriented, and righteous” (p. 104). The association between actions and intentions and the altruistic performative stance of the race ally calls into question the overall influence of this perspective.

Combining Identity Models and Pedagogical Perspectives

Aligning the four pedagogical positions and the two white identity development models can illustrate several of the overlapping conceptual thoughts and processes associated with adopting an antiracist viewpoint while working toward a more positive white identity. From this conversation several conclusions about these pedagogies and identity models can be deduced. Figure 2.1 in Appendix A shows how these ideas are being connected.

First, the mindset of antiracism is broadly applicable within the other three pedagogies. Race abolitionist, race accomplice/coconspirator, and race ally all have within them some form of antiracist perspective; however, they vary in degree of the individual's performance within that perspective. Second, each pedagogy is attentive to a process; but differ in the arrival at or praise of a 'status'. All of the pedagogical stances articulate the white individual who is participating in antiracist work and who is seeking to foment racial equity in some form; however, the characteristics that symbolize or the definition of the end point of each perspective are starkly different. Third, in their idealized formation and despite their different pathways or

tactics, all of these pedagogies require an intentional investigation of white identity; albeit to differing degrees. Each pedagogy, with different end goals in mind, position the white participant to be adept at understanding and, in some way, (re)forming their white identity in relation to antiracist thinking, action, and teaching.

Both Helms (2020) and Howard (2016) position their thinking of white identity development around the consistent and idiosyncratic processes that do not have finite end points or arrival locations at which a white person can place themselves and claim to have resolved the issues of whiteness, white privilege, or white supremacy. Both model's final stages, autonomy and transformationist, respectively, consider the caretaking and intentionality of being within that thought framework as well as noting that interactions with the preceding stages/orientations are probable (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016; Tatum, 1994). When placing these models alongside the four pedagogical positions, it is noteworthy to consider how similar the processes are. In each pedagogy, antiracist, white abolitionist, race accomplice/coconspirator, and race ally, a deliberate focus is placed on how the white individual sees themselves/orients themselves as part of whiteness and how they act in relationship to the oppressed. Antiracism fits across Helms' entire second phase (pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy) and Howard's transformationist orientation, given that a white person enacting antiracist behaviors and thinking is willingly questioning and challenging their whiteness in relationship to that which they are learning and seeing (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004; Thompson, 2003). The white abolitionist sees the conception of white identity as being part of the problem that prevents racial equity from taking place and considers a race traitorous transformation akin to an extreme mixing of Helms' disintegration and autonomous schemas and a totalizing of the transformationist orientation of Howard that converts the white person out of whiteness completely (Love, 2019; Garvey &

Ignatiev, 1997). The race accomplice/coconspirator position operates within Helms' schema of the autonomous white identity and Howard's transformationist orientation in that the white person's willing commitment to risk their white privilege shows both the recognition of that socially created benefit and the capacity for the white person to act, with intention, in response to situations in which white supremacy is being operationalized (Edwards, 2020; Love, 2019). The race ally pedagogical position within these models is more contestable given the critiques of the idealized notions and performative qualities of this antiracist mode. Adherents to the proposed archetypal concept of the race ally (e.g. Brodio, 2000; Brodio & Reason, 2005) might place this pedagogy at the final stages of both models; however, critics (e.g. Desnoyers-Colas, 2019; Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015) place false/performative allyship at the pseudo-independent schema (Helms, 2020) or integrationist orientation (Howard, 2016). This alignment of these pedagogical relationships to the models of white identity (re)formation relies on the investigation and analysis of how whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are operationalized within the individual who is enacting and choosing the pedagogical orientation.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter has outlined the foundations of this dissertation by looking at the terminology, primary theories, identity models, and pedagogical perspectives that are being applied. The terms, whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy were defined and presented as ideas that help to clarify how the white experience is categorized in this study. The frameworks of poststructuralism, critical whiteness studies, and mestiza consciousness were next explored. These three systems of thought were described, and their developments and characteristics articulated as they represent the foundational theories that ground this study's significance. And as tools to better locate the transformative act of white identity

(re)development within a teacher educator Helms' (2020) white identity development model and Howard's (2016) white identity orientations provide ways to situate this process in relationship to antiracist pedagogy. These elements combine to provide the necessary critical perspectives that allow me to effectively employ the evocative autoethnographic methodology that I will describe in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will detail the evocative autoethnographic methodology and the poetic narrative methods that I am employing in this study. First, I will give an overview of the general history, facets, and critiques of autoethnography as a researcher focused form of social sciences scholarship. As well, I will share details about the socially aware nature of evocative autoethnography and how this methodology best fits the intentions of this study. Lastly, I will address the method of poetic narrative writing that I use as a tool to inventory, sift, rupture, and then shape epiphanies into poems that make up the constellation of the autoethnography that is shared in Chapter 4.

Autoethnography Process and Product

Anderson (2006) and Chang (2008) orient the infancy of autoethnography in the early 20th century as social science research began scholarship associated with the researcher's self. The variety of early interests in the researcher's self are found in anthropological works that were aware of the "basic premise that culture and individuals are intricately intertwined" (Chang, 2008, p. 44). Anderson (2006) moves this thinking into the encouragement of early scholars to "pursue sociological involvement in settings close to their personal lives" (p. 375). Consistent with both origin stories is the centrality of the researcher as part of their research practice. This generic understanding provides an efficient place to begin locating the evolution of autoethnography as both a distinct research process and a specific research product (Ellis et al., 2011).

The first documented usage of the term autoethnography is attributed to anthropologist Karl Heider in 1975 as he described the stories told by Grand Valley Dani school children that showed "the Dani's own understanding of their world" (Heider, 1975, p. 3; Bochner & Ellis,

2016; Chang, 2016). Hayano (1979) later used the term to describe, ‘insider studies’ in which the researcher, the one conducting the study, was part (a participatory member) of the community or culture being studied (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Smith, 2005). In both original usages of the term, the perspective of the individual, the *who* that is telling the story, is exposed and declared; however, their understanding of *who the self is*, is different (Chang, 2016). Despite the differing definitions of self, the centrality of an individual’s lived experience, the ‘I’ telling their own story in their own cultural sphere, is crucial to autoethnography’s development and intent (Denzin, 2014).

The crisis of representation that took place in the 1980s actively troubled and questioned the “ontological, epistemological and axiological limitations” of social sciences research (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This was a turning point in the evolutionary process of autoethnography as scholars began to question the derivation, nature, and presentation of ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ and consequently interrogate the link between the researcher’s own positionality and their findings (Ellis et al., 2011, Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Scholars such as Kuhn (1962), Barthes (1977), Derrida (1976), Foucault (1970) and Bakhtin (1981) all contributed to the destabilization of the traditional empiricist framing of social sciences research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis et al, 2011). These shifting positional elements among some, but certainly not all, social science researchers allowed for a new way of thinking about voice and attitude in approaching qualitative research (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). According to Rorty’s (1982) postulation, this new method would prize “the utility of narratives and vocabularies rather than the objectivity of laws and theories” (p. 195). This turn to the postmodern and poststructuralist thinking about the intentional orientation of the researcher’s perspective from within their own research looking out to the cultural implications that influence

the researcher's self, led to what Bochner and Ellis (2016) describe as the blossoming of the "desire for something new – something qualitatively different and useful" (p. 49).

At this point in discussing the evolutionary process of autoethnography it is worthwhile to provide some broad definitions of the method/process in order to better contextualize the antecedent's relationship to the modern interpretations.⁸ From Ellis & Bochner's (2000) chapter in Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* the definition of autoethnography as, "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" presents the poststructuralist/postmodernist element of the "layers of consciousness" that provides the space and avenue for multiplied connections between the self and their cultural experiences (Muncey, 2010). Later, Ellis et al. (2011) clarify the facets of the dualistic nature of autoethnography as both a research process (describing and systematically analyzing) and a research product (a writing about personal and cultural experience). Taking a more etymological approach Ellis et al.'s (2011) definition of autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" presents a less contentious thinking than the earlier defining in that it is more encompassing of a variety of autoethnographic approaches (p. 1). Lastly, and to give a distinct rounding out to these definitions, Spry (2001) places autoethnography in a social activist role noting that it is "a self narrative that critiques the situations of self with others in social contexts" (p. 710).

⁸ Muncey's (2010) text *Creating Autoethnography* acknowledges that autoethnography exists in the "messy worlds" of social sciences approaches and seeks to help define it by offering four definitions from major scholars practicing this approach with the goal of avoiding an oversimplification of the broad spectrum of autoethnographic work (p. 28). While I will not highlight all four definitions from Muncey's work I will acknowledge that the discussion of the overlapping nature of those definitions inform my interpretations.

Types, Areas, Approaches, and Use of Autoethnography

With these broad definitions in mind the expansion of autoethnography can be charted as it has moved from the origins of the term as “insider stories” to more modern conceptions of the two broad types of autoethnographic work: analytic and evocative autoethnography. What is common among the definitions of autoethnography is the emphasis on the self as a focused evaluator of their own experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2000; Chang, 2016; Muncey, 2010). Further, these definitions fit collectively to place the sharing of that knowledge of self in a format that is cognizant of the author’s position within and affected by a dynamic cultural space (Ellis et al., 2011). What is interesting and causes a rift among some autoethnographers, is the placement of the purpose of autoethnographic study in the social sciences. Spry’s (2001) definition of autoethnographic work is attuned to social activism and Bochner & Ellis’s (2000) definition that links the intricacies of “layers of consciousness” to cultural practices and understanding in a poststructuralist way, runs contrary to the more general meanings that can be deduced from the etymological statement of Ellis et al. (2011). Taking up this broader perspective, Anderson (2006) asserts that there is a line of thinking that should be acknowledged in autoethnographic work that is more aligned with symbolic interactionism and with the “realist ethnographic tradition” of social scientist research at the Chicago School (Anderson, 2006, p. 374). Anderson calls this line of thinking analytic autoethnography.

This approach to researcher’s own experience eschews the “turn toward blurred genres of writing, a heightened self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, an increased focus on emotion in the social sciences, and the postmodern skepticism regarding generalization of knowledge claims” (Anderson, 2006, p. 373). Analytic autoethnography favors “an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena” (Anderson,

2006, p. 375). Bochner & Ellis (2016) counter this branch of autoethnographic study by identifying that evocative autoethnography's focus is on "evoking emotional reactions that inspire readers to reflect critically on their own lives and turn those reflections into actions" (p. 63). The difference cited here is in the purpose, the intended outcomes of the autoethnographic endeavor; connection to theory to contextualize meaning (analytic autoethnography) or connection to emotional agency in the reader to compel action (evocative autoethnography).

To be clear, Anderson (2006) does not dismiss that a researcher conducting analytical autoethnography will be devoid of emotion or avoid learning about themselves in the process. Rather, Anderson (2006) conditions this as the "self-knowledge that comes from understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to and in large part constituted by – and in turn helping to constitute – the sociocultural contexts in which we live" (p. 390). What distinguishes this line of thought from the evocative autoethnography that Ellis & Bochner (2000), Bochner & Ellis (2016), and Muncey (2010) advocate is the depth and intentionality of the process's focus on the emotional self. Muncey (2010) helps understand this distinction by identifying that analytical autoethnography's purpose is not "to evoke a response" but rather "to contribute to the discourse" about the intended topic (p. 36). Evocative autoethnography, on the other hand, merits its title in asking the researcher to focus "outward on social and cultural aspects of personal experience; [and] then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, resist cultural interpretations" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Underneath these two broad types of autoethnography falls a litany of differing approaches and design structures to the autoethnographic process and product. Ellis et al. (2011) says of these forms that they "differ in how much emphasis is placed on the study of others, the

researcher's self and interaction with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context, as well as power relationships" (p. 4). Examples of these approaches include critical performance autoethnography, co-created autoethnography/duoethnography, community autoethnographies, personal narrative autoethnographies, and poetic-narrative autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011). While this listing is by no means complete, it offers insight into the many perspectives available to the scholar who is approaching an autoethnographic project.

Purpose and Process of Conducting Evocative Autoethnography

Ellis, et al. (2011) summarize the process of doing evocative autoethnography as, "retrospectively and selectively writ[ing] about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (p. 3). Chang (2008) considers this process as a triad of orientations that the researcher considers as, "ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretative orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48). Like the process of composing a literary autobiography, this process is comprised of the identification of epiphanies that are noteworthy/life changing to the experience of the author. Denzin (2014) defines the epiphany as "interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested" (p. 52). Selection of these epiphanies is not random but intentional to the existential understanding of the autoethnographer about their lived experiences as well as the connection to the broader culture that the researcher is intending to understand/critique. In a practical and process-oriented sense, autoethnography combines the elements of ethnographic research with the literary practices of crafting a compelling autobiography that engages the reader in thoughtful introspection.

In what feels like a deceptively simple explanation, Chang (2016) outlines the ethnographic element of this process as one of, “collecting data, ... analyzing and interpreting them [the data], and producing the scholarly reports” (p. 48). While feeling simple and straightforward the details of this facet of the autoethnographic process are far from easy. For the autoethnographer, the data collected falls into three general categories as explicated by Chang (2016): personal memory data, self-observational/self-reflective data, and external data. These data sources, while centered on the author’s experience, still reflect the “partial and situated” story that took place as well as a larger story that does, or could, take place beyond the authors own experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It is in the collection of varied data materials from varied source contributors (both inside and outside the author) that constitute the autoethnographic data corpus. This outline echoes the research process of the traditional ethnographer’s emic focus in collecting data through observation (documented through field notes), interviews of cultural participants, and/or the understanding of artifacts in relation to practices (Ellis, et al., 2011).

Chang (2016) points out that the process of data analysis and interpretation in the autoethnographic tradition, while overlapping and flowing with the data collection stage, ultimately is that of traditional ethnography in that the understanding of self that is gained through the study seeks to advance in some way a “cultural understanding” beyond the individual (p. 125). Therefore, the analysis and interpretation are the important tools to refine, frame, and characterize the collected data for the researcher; while simultaneously offering clarity to the audience who gain new or evolving insight into their own experiences as revealed in the researcher’s experiences (Ellis et al., 2011).

In considering the process of writing an evocative autoethnographic work, it is important to recall the roots of this scholarly practice within autobiography and literature. Ellis et al. (2011) describe the finished product of the autoethnographer as “aesthetic and evocative [with] thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience” (p. 4). The means to create this product require the researcher to engage with their analyzed data and then strategically organize the patterned and connected reflections on culture using the “facets of storytelling..., showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice” (p. 4). Bochner & Ellis (2016) position the author in this as a storyteller/narrator who is crafting the woven together elements of the analyzed epiphanies into the engaging story that is complete with character, setting, plot, moral, and conflict. Denzin (2014) highlights that in writing a story that is “always an interpretative account” that is “biased” the storyteller/narrator finds themselves in a contested position as to the truth or verisimilitude of their craft (p. 57). This critique regarding how the autoethnographic process and product are received is worthy of specific consideration.

Ethics, Limitations, and Veracity

Autoethnography contributes to social sciences’ scholarship in its combined endeavors to make visible/explore larger socio-cultural formations from within the subjective confines of the individual’s interior spaces (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014; Muncey, 2010). This dichotomous relationship between the outer world of cultural spaces and the inner world of individual experience is cited by critics of this methodology as being too troublesome in that it blurs the lines of “reliability, validity, and generalizability” such that these terms’ meaning and use must be altered when applied to autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 7). It is further argued that in altering these terms, autoethnography’s contribution is rendered ever more limited and confining given that only the individual’s biased, narcissistic, and self-indulgent feelings and

choices about the topic are encountered and utilized in the data collection, analysis/interpretation, and sharing of findings (Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011). Criticism of the way in which autoethnography shares its findings is leveled from both sides of the debate as academic scholars note that the writing is too literary and commonplace; while writers of autobiographical works claim the writing is too academic and exclusionary for all audiences (Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011). Having presented some of the multiple confrontations that autoethnography faces as both a research process and product it is worthwhile to offer some comments on why this perspective is relevant and how a scholar can respond to these (in some cases, valid) concerns.

Concerns regarding the reliability of an autoethnographic work are centered on the credibility of the narrator's accounting and sharing of their experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). In making this judgement the reader is asking if there is an alignment between the details that the author is sharing in their narrative with the available (and believable) evidence presented (Ellis et al., 2011). Chang (2008) cites the overreliance on personal memory data as well as the researcher's approach that "dig[s] deeper in personal experiences without digging wider in the cultural context" as related to this pitfall that can affect reliability (p. 54). Tools that challenge this critique also further deepen the power and resonance of the autoethnographic process. By seeking more independent sources that can enrich and corroborate/contradict personal memory data, (i.e. physical artifacts, pictures, statistical data, or interviews with other participants, etc.) the author is able to link their remembrances with alternative sources (Chang, 2008).

Additionally, including these sources advances the validity of the autoethnographic account by supporting a "verisimilitude; [that] evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 7). By bringing out a diversity of data points and perspectives related to and concomitant with the

storyteller's/narrator's own perspectives the autoethnography bridges a gap between the inside perspective of the writer and the outside point of connection for the reader (Chang, 2008). While this blending of viewpoints, in or elicited by the work, does not rise to the objective level of generalizability attributed to an empirical quantitative study (e.g. single subject design) or a more traditional qualitative social sciences work (e.g. case study) it does meet the intended goal of an autoethnography that moves from the individual to a collective cultural understanding (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As Ellis et al. (2011) comment, "the focus of generalizability ... is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know" (p. 8). An autoethnography is made more general by the way in which the reader is able to see themselves or others they know within the narrative or have illuminated for them the "unfamiliar cultural" other in a believable way (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 8).

As noted above, using external data sources is a powerful and purposeful tool for supporting and expanding the influence of an autoethnographic study; however, utilizing these sources requires the researcher to contend with some important ethical considerations (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014; Muncey, 2010). While it may seem as though writing an autoethnography only subjects the author to a state of vulnerability as they divulge personal experiences and revelations; it is also possible that others (e.g. character participants in the written narrative or individuals contributing specific data) are at increased risk of being vulnerable to exposures of information they may not want in the public eye (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011; Muncey, 2010). Thus, ethical considerations must be well-thought-out regarding how to maintain, as much as possible, the confidentiality of those characters named/cited as part of the plot of the self-narrative or as part of the analytical comparison process (Chang, 2008). Given the characteristically close individual nature of the storytelling related to the selected

epiphanies that the author will be using, anonymity is not guaranteed given that by identifying specific locations, notable individuals, or historic place-based events it may be easy to deduce the identity of contributors (Chang, 2008).

To address these ethical dilemmas, it is incumbent upon the researcher to be diligent in their process of project approval by seeking the guidance of an Institutional Review Board (IRB), being upfront and transparent with participants about the risks of involvement, and then crafting their shared results in a way that is respectful of both their participants' wishes and the theoretical frame of their research (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In practice, this could mean that the researcher must share their work before publication with those that could be implicated in the finished product and in so doing allowing the participants to respond and address how they were portrayed (Ellis et al., 2011). This feedback can/should condition what information is presented by the researcher and in what way that information is disclosed. Further, it is possible that some data and its companion analysis be reported in a way that masks some of the identifying features of person, location, or position to allow for as much confidentiality as possible while not losing the essence of interpretation related to the cultural and individual topic under critique (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2008; Ellis et al. 2011).

Denzin (2014) offers this response to the criticism of autoethnography as “being [a] nonanalytic, self-indulgent, irreverent, sentimental, and romantic” (p. 69) mode of scholarship. “The goal [of autoethnography] is not to produce a standard social science article. The goal is to write performance texts in a way that moves others to ethical action” (Denzin, 2014, p. 70). As already noted, the ways in which autoethnography (and more specifically evocative autoethnography) is defined situate its aims as placing individual epiphanies in the contexts of larger cultural understandings in ways that engage, compel, and alter reader's realities (Bochner

& Ellis, 2016; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This ethos is separate from that of many traditional social sciences methodologies and positivistic approaches and therefore judging them on the same terrain is bound to create division (Ellis et al, 2011; Denzin, 2014). Arguments also abound about the scholarly value of such work that celebrates story, metaphor, plot, and image (Denzin, 2014; Muncey, 2010). However, Ellis & Bochner (2000) offer a powerful response to these arguments. In their narrative consideration about the role of research in not only the academy but also the public sector, they argue that autoethnography has the potential to let humans “learn to open ourselves to ourselves and to each other, [and in so doing] we find it easier to drop some resistance to different ideas” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 760). In opening this space, evocative autoethnography supports room for scholars to be engaging with poignant and timely social concerns that they individually wrestle with in a medium that serves as both a means to support others struggling as well as benefiting the scholar’s own process of self-discovery and personal understanding.

Methodology in this Study

My work is an evocative autoethnographic project that utilizes the poetic-narrative method that Furman (2007) shares and Hanauer (2012a, 2012b) borrows. Following the creative steps of the mestiza consciousness and utilizing poetic voice, language, and format, this autoethnographic approach to writing, data creation/collection, interpretation, and analysis creates a vulnerable and liminal space that allows for an authentic exploration of the overlapping (re)formation experiences of my white identity (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014; Furman, 2007; Hanauer, 2012a, 2012b). In this section, I will detail the methods I used to undertake this project.

I used the steps of Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) creative process and general organization of *Borderlands: La Frontera* as an outline for my methods (Feghali, 2011). The first step of this process is to "take inventory" and collect the epiphanies that represent those experiences and moments that allow me to explore my white identity as a teacher educator. Next, I share how those epiphanies were put "through a sieve" to better acquaint myself with their meanings and generate the initial versions of the poems that begin to construct the narrative. Then, I discuss how I challenge my understanding of each epiphany and poem and "communicate the rupture" by cross-referencing them with specific emotional concepts through an emotion coding analysis. And finally, I detail the layered process of crafting, editing, and organizing that moved the epiphanies from their original versions into the finished poetic narrative that "shap[es] a new myth" of my white identity as a teacher educator.

Take Inventory. The first step of my method was to intentionally collect those moments and experiences that have left imprints on my white identity development. Anzaldúa (1987/2012) considers this the time in which the writer looks at the "baggage" that is "inherited from [their] ancestors" (p. 104). In my usage of this step, I used Chang's (2008) autobiographical timeline and self-inventory approaches to look back to experiences that I have either written about in poems or personal/academic journaling and/or epiphanous episodes that concern my white identity as a teacher educator. To structure this process more efficiently and to better order events when specific dates were unclear, I placed these epiphanies into three epochs that corresponded to transitions within my teaching/teacher education practice as well as seminal personal events. (See Figure 3.1. in Appendix B.)

As the definition of epiphany implies, there could be a wide variety of "moments of crisis. [that] ... alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life" (Denzin, 2014, p.

52). Therefore, I limited the scope of possible epiphanies by choosing specific thematic considerations relative to the theoretical frameworks of this study (Chang, 2008). The identified epiphanies fell into at least one or more of the following considerations:

- Specific experiences with racism/white supremacy/personal privilege
- Challenging teaching decisions regarding power/privilege/whiteness
- Personal enactments of power/privilege/whiteness
- Questioning about identity relative to teaching/whiteness

Using these considerations as guidelines, I went back through 30+ years of collected writings (poetry, prose, journal entries, and academic writings) and crafted a digital version of each writing, maintaining the original formatting and language except for nominal spelling edits. Each of these writings represented at least one epiphany. Using the titles of these writings as a starting point, I developed epiphanic statements that could then be used to identify each writing artifact and arranged the events in loose chronological order given their corresponding epoch (see Figure 3.2 in Appendix B).

As well during this step, I kept analytic memos of my thinking about both gaps in the pre-created written materials as well as noteworthy epiphanies that were occurring contemporaneously. I was able to uncover and collect several more noteworthy events that were vital to capture in this process (Denzin, 2014). These ‘present tense’ epiphanies were added to the epochs by noting when the events took place chronologically using the same epoch scale.

Another facet of the organizational structure of the epochs was the ability to position my experiences within the larger social constructs of the institutionally racist and white supremacist society (Denzin, 2014; Leonardo, 2002). The demarcation of these points in time, albeit linked directly to my singular experiences, allowed me to position my evolution alongside socio-

cultural events that acted as catalysts or turning points. For example, the September 11, 2001, attacks and the rampant islamophobia that followed, the devastating December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, and the murders of countless people of color by police officers, are large scale catastrophes with broad implications across the globe that had immediate effects on my positioning as a teacher as well as a white person. Being able to see the epiphanies that I wrote about or was influenced by, in the past, provided me with valuable perspectives regarding what I was leaving out. By both looking at the epiphanies from the hyper focused microscopic scale to the larger globalized macroscopic implications I was able to better connect them to a narrative that grows larger than just myself as I went through the remaining steps detailed in the following sections. The collection of epiphanies is shared in Figure 3.2 in Appendix B and are listed with an “Epiphany Epoch” designation that notes when the event occurred⁹.

Through a Sieve. The next step I took was using the inventoried “baggage” and working to understand it by sifting out the nuances and looking more directly into what these moments in my experience showed me (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012, p. 104). This was the first of two writing focused steps in this overall process and consisted of two different elements of work: editing of pre-created poems and new poem creation. Both tasks required a directed focus and attention to the overall themes and emotional elements that made each epiphany noteworthy. This process also allowed for the overall list of epiphanies to be narrowed down by combination or elimination in that some epiphanies/pre-created poems identified the same events but did not clearly convey their central ideas as well. Also, upon further reading and reflection several of the epiphanies/pre-created poems selected in this inventory step did not fit in the original inventory criteria and were eliminated from consideration for the final autoethnographic account.

⁹The epoch in which a poem was written is noted by the row, “Written Epoch” in Figure 3.2 in Appendix B.

Editing of pre-created works. The process of editing the pieces of writing that were discovered in the “take inventory” step consisted of several different tasks. First, and easiest, was looking for spelling or punctuation errors that were not central to the overall meaning of the poem. Second, the pieces of writing were scrutinized for factual veracity where relevant. An example of this is in the pre-created poem, *On the 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*. The original title and the numeric calculations that are part of the poem’s text erroneously listed the 25th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide rather than the accurate 20th anniversary given that the poem was written in 2014. The changes that took place to bring the poem into factual accuracy did not change the overall tone/context of the poem. The third, and most challenging, edits to the pre-created works were those that impacted the structure and word choice of the writings. These edits were challenging in that I attempted, as much as possible, to maintain the original emotional and thematic intent while improving the way in which the poem conveyed that meaning. An example of this editing strategy is included in Figure 3.3 in Appendix B.

In this editing process, my focus was on preserving the intention of each writing while utilizing the tools of poetry to make that intention clearer and more approachable. In the example (Figure 3.3 in Appendix B), removing the repetition of “I wonder” throughout the poem served to highlight the text of the questions and allow the focus to transcend the limits of the narrator. In the new version, the reader is more able to ask these questions of themselves and not be limited to only my perspective. Also, the small change in the third stanza from “Now, a couple weeks later;” to “Short weeks later” gives a better indication of the variability of time that exists in the realizations that are taking part for the narrator. This intensifies the arch of change that takes place over the course of the poem’s plot. Finally, the title was changed from *I wonder poem, Spring 2005* to *First Fall, 2004* as I discovered the factual error of the date and noted upon

reading several of the other pre-created poems in this epoch that there was an early trend of questioning about my role as a teacher that began at the earliest part of my teacher education training. Identifying that this poem was situated at the beginning of that timeline placed its tone and voice into a more accessible location for a reader.

New poem creation. The second element of this phase was taking the epiphanies without fully established poems and the memos generated during the “take inventory” step and crafting them into fleshed out written pieces. The goal of this writing was not to generate a final version of each poem, rather the intention was to further scrutinize each idea and sift out more of the nuances and revelations that each could provide. This creative process did not follow a singular, straightforward path for each of the epiphanies and the connected memos as each necessitated its own unique development. To represent some of this method, I provide two examples of this process that represent several of the approaches I used.

For the poem titled, *I can Breathe and Why that Matters* I have outlined the process of development from the original note in the memo through my thinking/creative process and into the first version of the poem’s text in Figure 3.4 in Appendix B. As this memo derived from a widely publicized event that I observed and was contextualized into a physical experience by a friend, I began by understanding my own experience (using the first person pronouns) in the act of breathing, noting the physiological features of taking a breath (e.g. “lightheadedness rise up my body”, “my lungs filled out” and “expanding/the wet alveoli of my lungs/and the beat of my heart”). Then, I made the connection between the physical acts and the manifestations of my emotions: the way in which I felt nervous about discussing the conviction of George Floyd’s killer (e.g. “expanded beyond the pressure of a knee to the back of my neck”) and the self-reflective implications of my whiteness in my reactions to this event (e.g. “For that breath, I feel

guilt and shame./Because I enjoyed it.”). Finally, my considerations looked at the perspective with which I was naming and placing my view of the entire situation acknowledging that I could extricate myself from the physical involvement in this moment (e.g. “I exhaled long and slow” and “I surged/with a restless energy that/ was life”), but not remove myself from a responsibility related to this event (e.g. “for I could breathe./ And that matters.”).

Another example of this writing process came from the process to create the poem titled, *A Note of Thanks* shared in Figure 3.5 in Appendix B. This poem was generated from an epiphanic experience that occurred early in my teacher education experience that I had not ever written about. I discovered in developing this poem that locating the event in a physical space (e.g. “My office”) allowed me to show backstory, character, and tone that an adherence to only dialogue would have prevented. This more genuine look at “The Scene” in part 1 of the poem let the reader sit in on the plot of the conversation and let me bring in the conflict in part 2 in a more organic way that fit more closely with how I recall the event taking place. While this recollection of the event’s details was certainly impacted by time and my reflection on them, the poem still related the emotional confrontation of this moment (Denzin, 2014). At this point in crafting this poem, I saw the narrative arch taking shape and considered how best to conclude the exchange. I shifted the perspective to the letter in the third part to acknowledge the confessional nature of those traits that I lacked in this experience as well as recognizing those traits that the student exemplified. In the comparison between the two of us, I made more real those emotional elements that made this moment an epiphany for me in the first place.

Communicating the Rupture. The two previous steps sought to generate an inventory of epiphanies around the (re)development of my white identity as a teacher educator and then sift out the nuances of those experiences into more refined and accessible forms, the first versions of

the poems. The third step I undertook was to rupture those poems to “document the struggle” that they represent (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 104). To accomplish this understanding, I utilized a coding model to cross-reference the epiphanies and poems with emotions that were either manifested within the epiphanies or were made apparent during the process of writing the poems. Utilizing several of Chang’s (2008) strategies for discovering/developing data pieces for an autoethnographic study coupled with Furman’s (2007) considerations of the overlap of existential themes explored through poetry and companion narrative insights, this model allowed me to place each epiphany and poem in relationship to the broad host of emotions that were present (Figure 3.6 in Appendix B).

Goleman’s (1995) definition of emotion as, “a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act” (p. 289) provides a worthwhile guide for how I identified and included specific emotions in this model. As I interacted with each epiphany and its related poem, I took note of: (1) emotions explicitly stated by the poem, (2) emotions that I felt while crafting the poem, (3) emotions that were conveyed by description(s) in the poem, (4) emotions that I felt because of the poem after reading it, and/or (5) emotions that were conveyed in the epiphany, but had not (yet) been translated into the poem.

Within this initial analytical coding process¹⁰, I was both noting where emotions were occurring while also adding new emotions that were being discovered (Saldana, 2016). This was an iterative process that took place over three separate readings of the materials created in the previous steps. As well, this required a consistent reflective notation and revision process that nuanced further how some of the emotions needed to be clarified in their initial understanding or

¹⁰ As this was an initial first round coding practice it will also be discussed in the findings section of Chapter 5 in relationship to the other analytical processes that were used after the final autoethnographic poetic narrative was completed.

needed to evolve. For example, as I identified emotions related to anger, I discovered over the analysis process that I directed this feeling both inwardly and outwardly. Therefore, I divided this emotion into “anger-self” and “anger-other” to represent the directionality of this feeling. As well, in this process I discovered upon reflection after the first full reading of all the poems that a consistent series of questioning in the poems presented the emotional vestiges of hope and curiosity; two emotional connections I did not initially expect to include. A listing of the emotions, their definitions as I understood them, and examples from the poems at this phase of the methodological process is shared in Figure 3.7 in Appendix B.

After the three stages of identifying these emotional connections, I was then able to represent the emotions in a numerical orientation that showed a frequency trend and identified prominently those emotions that I consistently identified (Figure 3.8 in Appendix B). Those emotions with the highest frequencies represent more a higher occurrence rate across all readings. For example, the emotion of guilt was documented a total of 34 times across all three readings giving it an overall frequency of 11.3. As well, this frequency information identified poems/epiphanies that, in this writing iteration did not convey many, or any, of the identified emotions.

Equipped with the frequency data and the analytical notes crafted during the communicating the rupture step I next considered Elenes’ (2001) perspective of naming the “different, contradictory, and oppositional points of view” within an individual as a way for ideas to be held up to and subjected to specific discussion and scrutiny (p. 351). I was then better able to see and examine how these emotions existed across all the poems in order to derive a narrative that refined and placed each poem as a more intentional part of “shaping a new myth” of my white identity as a teacher educator. This process will be shared in the next step.

Shaping a New Myth. Following the discoveries made by the rupturing of the poems through the cross coding of emotions, the next process was to utilize these new understandings to shape a new myth that reflects the narrative of my (re)developed white identity (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987). This process took two distinct forms that happened concurrently: the development of each poem as a nuanced and telling exploration of my whiteness and the overall narrative structure of the combined poems into a meaningful and impactful story. These processes overlapped as with the shaping of each poem the overall order/narrative of the poems had to be considered/revised. To better describe these two elements of this step, I will address these two processes separately.

Specific Poem Revisions. This portion of reshaping began by looking at the emotional rupture chart (Figure 3.6 in Appendix B) from the previous methodological step and considering how each poem conveyed/connected to the identified emotions and how those emotional elements contributed to the exploration and understanding of my identity (re)development. To make this more strategic, I began by looking at the poems that had the lowest occurrence of all identified emotions and moved up to those poems with the highest occurrences. In approaching the poems this way, I was able to better determine if each poem needed to be:

- eliminated completely from the narrative due to lack of influence,
- combined with other poem(s) that either shared a topical connection or an emotional connection, or
- needed revision relative to their connected epiphany.

Beyond simply the quantity of emotional connections that a poem contributed, I also considered each poem's scenic, thematic, character development, or narrative links. In some cases, a poem was included in the final autoethnography that did not convey a comparatively

large quantity of emotional elements but did share an aesthetic facet of the overall identity (re)development narrative that was necessary to telling a complete and compelling story. For example, upon analysis, the poem *My White Standing Stones* did not have a large emotional connection by volume; however, the thematic connections to my ancestry and views on whiteness in society at large, scenic connections to the natural world (an important theme), and the narrative connection to a transitional view of my placement within white supremacy all provided vital elements to the overall poetic narrative. Additionally, the poem, *I am not a savior*, had very low overall quantity of emotions identified, and I evaluated that it did not add any significant new scenic, thematic, character development, or narrative links that were not already developed elsewhere. Therefore, the *I am not a savior* poem was cut from the final narrative.

I continued the evaluation process by looking back at the emotions identified over the readings in the communicating the rupture step and the considered areas of emotional concentrations or divisions. For example, in rupturing the poem *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*, across all three readings I consistently documented and made analytical notations about the emotions of shame, guilt, and pity identifying a concentration of these emotions. As well, across the three readings of this poem I also encountered divisions in the identified emotions noting inconsistencies in the identification of the emotions of anger-self, pride, disgust, care, and love. As I worked to shape this poem into the new myth, these details showed me that a primary focus of this poem was to convey my earliest (this poem comes from the epoch 1 noted in Figure 3.1 in Appendix B) understandings of myself as having a distinct white identity that was influenced by the location in which I grew up. Seeing this focus of the poem allowed me to best revise the poem to highlight and keep an emotional focus on the guilt, shame, and pity while also positioning it early in the overall narrative (see Narrative Arc Revisions section). The remaining

emotions that were identified in this reading presented another point of evaluation/decision as I revised. Based upon the analytical memos as well as considerations of the poem's role in presenting character, setting, theme, and plot, I had to choose to either increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the emotional elements of the poem that led to that emotion being identified. In this poem's case, I recognized the importance of establishing early that elements of my identity development process were connected to a defensiveness about and disgust with my lack of knowledge/exposure to considerations of white privilege early in my educational experience. Therefore, in revising this poem, I chose to amplify the emotions of defensiveness and disgust by better describing and exploring the images and themes that I used to share my earliest schooling experiences in a community and school that had a connection to violence related to desegregation. In making this choice, I did not specifically neglect the other emotions that were identified, rather, I made a narrative choice as to the best emotions to develop and support the narrative around my white identity (re)development (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Also, at this point in the revision process, the titles of each poem that were established in the "taking inventory" step were reevaluated relative to each poem's new form. Some titles remained unchanged for example, *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss* and *First Fall, 2004*. Other poems changed very slightly in order to clarify their intent more clearly, for example, *Diversity is a Block on Eddy Street* became *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, as the specificity of the setting was central to the poem's intention and theme. And several poem's titles changed dramatically from the original poem/epiphany. For example, *Minneapolis Burns, May 2020* became, *Three, I Must Stand Up* as the poem evolved in the "shaping a new myth" process to be more connected to my actions and reflections on those actions rather than the original title's focus on the events in Minneapolis at that specific time.

This process of revision and questioning the intent of the emotional elements as presented in each poem was repeated for each piece of the narrative. Given that changes and edits to the poems also affect their placement in the narrative it is important to note that this was an overlapping process with the next portion of this step, determining the narrative arc of this autoethnography.

Narrative Arc Revisions. Bochner & Ellis (2016) describe the crafting of story as that of the “architect and engineer who takes the raw material of experience and builds a structure to contain it and puts the parts in their right places” (p. 93). In engineering the narrative of this poetic autoethnography, I used a generic story plot arc (Figure 3.9 in Appendix B) to visualize the basic elements of story (introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion) and the elements that provide the structure necessary to convey/advance the plot forward (theme, character, and setting) (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Then, while re-reading the poems I used the following questions and the poem specific answers to make detailed determinations about the best “right places” to put each poem relative to the architecture of this narrative arc:

1. What elements of setting does the poem establish? Are these elements unique to this one poem or are they consistent across several poems? Poems that develop and share specific setting (time, place, etc) details should be placed closer to the introduction of narrative. Those poems with less defined settings or poems on which the setting is not as relevant to the emotional relevance of the poem may be placed throughout the narrative.
2. What character elements does the poem establish? Are these elements unique to this one poem or are they consistent across several poems? As I am the central protagonist of this narrative who are the antagonists/secondary characters in this poem, and have

they been established previously? Poems that develop and share specific character details that are needed to better position the reader to see and understand the context of later actions/thoughts/choices should be placed closer to the introduction of the narrative. As the narrative's action rises so should the characters challenge and struggle. Once the climax of the narrative is reached the protagonist should be encountering the most visceral of changes/conflicts leading toward the falling action and eventually the resolution which presents a new/altered character.

Antagonists/secondary characters that are introduced should fit into a progressive and intentional system by which their participation makes logical sense to the narration (e.g. a student should not be introduced as a character until the protagonist's role as a teacher is established).

3. What thematic elements does the poem present? Are these thematic elements unique to this one poem or are they consistent across several poems? Themes utilized throughout the narrative serve to carry developing connections to cultural understandings that exist and guide beyond the basic elements of plot. By recognizing these themes and how they interact and develop it allows me to consider more intentionally relationships between the poems and the broader lived experiences of the writer and the audience and in so doing draw the narrative's meaning into a more accessible context.
4. Does the poem work in tandem with specific other poems such that it must fit with a specific poem to make narrative/contextual sense? Looking at each poems' connections to one another allowed me to determine, given the narrative contexts, where each poem needed to be positioned relative to the poems they

preceded/followed. Similar in consideration to character, setting, and plot progression as noted above, this consideration was more wholistic of the poem's overall tone and presentation.

5. As it relates to my identity understanding, does the poem show a wholly new idea that establishes a conflicted position, a continuance of a specific idea that is being actively addressed, or the resolution of an already established idea into a new understanding? This determination considers a poems' placement along the plot arc by determining if/how the poem presented its central conflict in relationship to the broader goal of identity (re)development. In a very simple orientation, poems were first placed in either, introduction (wholly new ideas), climax (continuance of a specific idea), or conclusion (a resolution into a new understanding).
6. Do the emotions (as represented in the emotional rupture) in the poem present an increasing understanding of a newly discovered facet of my white identity or is there a deepening development of an already established understanding? This emotionally centered evaluation task using the emotional rupture information from the "communicating the rupture" methodology step (Figure 3.6 in Appendix B) addressed a poem's position within the rising action (increasing understanding of a newly discovered facet) or the falling action (deepening development). Poems that address, fracture, and actively challenge identity understandings in a way that breaks open a newly proposed idea and/or begins the deepening process would be placed in the climax position within the narrative arc.

Completing the narrative arc. To complete the narrative arc creation the singular evaluation of each poem and the overall narrative location questions of each poem were used.

First, using the details from the narrative location questions, the poems were divided into three rough categories: introductory, climatic, and conclusive. Once in each of these categories the emotional elements identified in the “communicating the rupture” step and narrative elements of setting, character, and theme were consulted to orient the poems in connection to the other poems in that grouping. This determination process considered how newly presented ideas were being introduced while also bearing in mind the development of concepts previously explored in other poems. Within each of these rough groupings, the poems could be seen as more intricate parts of the whole narrative being crafted and thus more easily placed into the order that best fit. After all the poems were placed into the best fit order in each grouping the larger narrative took shape into its final form.

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the evocative autoethnographic methodology that I used to develop my poetic narrative autoethnography. To clarify the distinct qualities of my own study, I began this chapter by looking at the defining features, history, and types of autoethnography. I shared the distinctions between analytic and evocative autoethnographic studies to position this work’s aims of generating a passionate response from its readers. Next, I looked at some of the critiques of this methodology that are necessary to consider as I developed the autoethnographic product. And, finally, I described the four-step process I employed to move from a collected inventory of epiphanic moments that challenged my white identity to a finished and refined narrative that shares my transformative experience on the way to a (re) developed white identity. In Chapter 4 the complete poetic narrative autoethnographic product of this journey is shared.

Chapter 4: Transformative Narrative

Imagine the night sky with its complex mixture of planets, comets, moons, and distant suns. By connecting any number of these points of light we create images of cultural significance, constellations, that are waypoints of recognition in an otherwise overwhelming display of the infinitesimal nature of the universe. Whether astrophysics crosses our minds daily or not, we are still conditioned by our cultural ancestry to name, dream about, and consider the powerful influences of these celestial bodies. From the earliest of our history as humans, records of the sky at night have been connected to how we view and understand ourselves. The constellations' influences range from the designs of ancient architecture (e.g. Stonehenge (UK), Machu Picchu, Teotihuacan (Peru), Nabta Playa (Egypt)), to the direct religious correlations as embodiments of gods, goddesses, or animal deities, to the practical use as navigational points to lead the way across dark oceans or plains, and to the prediction of auspicious or tragic events. Into our modern day we still revere the night sky by building a lexicon around Hollywood stars, linking fortune to "Wishing on a Star," or our fascination with boldly going where no man has gone before.

Further even our own development as a species has affected how we view constellations. Humans who live in parts of the world that have light emitting infrastructure see only the closest objects in the night sky, while those away from light pollution see a totally different display. With the advent of technology, we can surf the internet to see images of distant galaxies or take in a lecture on the nature of the cosmos. Still though, despite what we have access to, we still look up at night and look for some image, some meaning as so much of our cultural ethos derives from or is connected to the sky at night.

We link a cultural intimacy between the sky we see at night and the world we define within ourselves through the images we can, even vaguely, discern. As multi-layered complex cultural

symbols, constellations and their interpreted stories work well as a metaphor for the poetic narrative of my (re)development of my white identity that is presented in this chapter. As a white teacher educator seeking to find direction in the process of becoming a more socially just, antiracist educator I consider myself a nighttime stargazer seeking to find the boundaries of a constellation that provides direction, clarity, and story. Gazing into my identity in this way is, however, just like the sky we see at night, conditioned by the tools and filters I possess, pollutions I encounter, and expertise I employ.

Each poetic element, presented in this chapter, represents one complex point of light in a constellation of connected ideas and understandings related to an overall view of my white identity that is directionally pointing me toward being antiracist. Within each element of this narrative is a complexity of image, mood, tone, perspective, and metaphor. Taken individually, each element functions within its own temporal space much like the light from the stars we see, because of their distance, exist in a different time (the birth of the light and the distance it travels to our eyes). Taken as a narrative whole, the elements work together to form the constellation's overall image; a summation of those experiences that form the outlines and storylines to shape an identifiable picture that points toward my (re)developed white identity.

Authorial Voice – Stargazer

Time and imagination are necessary for seeing the shape of a constellation. As the author of each of these points of light that are fit intentionally together, I am a stargazer who is viewing the sky at each opportunity from varied locations along a journey. Each night I see the image form under differing conditions, at different altitudes, and with different viewing equipment; however, each night I have the same goal of clarifying the constellations image. Viewing the authorship

from this perspective allows for several different advantages: a fluid perspective on time, a non-reductive immersion in creativity, and agency in defining the narrative arch.

First, each poem is derived from a specific epiphany (defined in chapter 2), which was the original idea for each piece of poetry, that is located in one time and reflective of that given circumstance and then edited/revised at a later time (Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014). This temporal shifting allows for the piece of writing to fit as both a record of where I once was, as well as, where I am; much like the tools an astrophysicist uses to identify a new planet or star's existence not by actual observation, but rather by noting what the celestial body left behind. This process of creation and editing is indicative of the poststructuralist concept of subjectivity as not an arrived at location, but a fluid chain of significant understandings over time and reflection (Barker & Jane, 2016).

Second, the stargazer as author point of view allows for a full immersion in the act of creativity in each poem. Seeing all ideas from a variety of perspectives allows me to make fullest use of the literary tools of language such as tone, style, and image as well as character and cadence. I am not limited by academic discourse or raciolinguualized notions of the proper grammar and, in some ways like *Borderlands*, I can blend style, voice, and pattern to explore the furthest reaches of each idea more freely (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012).

Third, in taking together time and creative design I have placed each poem in a specific and intentional order and orientation that develops the constellation and shares my new myth of white identity. However, the image and form that shows must, in part, be completed by the reader as they add their own understanding and knowledge. Anzaldúa's suggestion is that "the reader has to fill in a lot of the gaps" and in so doing it snares the reader as a co-creator (Barvosa, 2013, p. 189). As the author I have, with intention, shown you the salient points of light of which

my constellation is created, and your work as a reader, is to use your own experience to build upon those connections so that we can create the fuller picture together.

Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss

This is the way the world is.
Stable. Quiet. Undisturbed.
A calm sea of white blissful fog
comforting for its regularity.
Prized for its uniformity.
Sought for its conformity
as an undisturbed ideal.

In the town of the Sunday-bombed school¹¹
there is a certain kind of bliss to ignorance.
A white-washed state of existence that
blankets the world under a cloak of homogeneity.
Normalcy descends like the white mist
over the Bland River¹² each summer morning.
A sweat heavy humid shade of the perpetual

look of sameness every day. To be abnormal
here means a quality of foreignness, strangeness
beyond conception. Existence of the *other* is
abstract as all things fit into the context
of Thompson's drug store and Workman's outlet¹³.
Dualities are not part of this quiet narrative.

Boy Scout codes and moral ideals of honor are
never interrogated; if you earned enough merit,
you got the badge. The symbolic suggestion
of honor, faith, hard earned work,
and privilege, left unspoken. In the safety
of this blissfulness, power is explained
by coded degree; some things are bad...
to be something different was worse.

Little white boys protected within the known.
Safe here to go make mistakes and learn,
ignorant bliss protects the innocent in crisp
white dress shirts that have been washed
in name brand detergent by stay-at-home
mothers who are always waiting with dinner.

Here it is, an ideal sitting at arm's reach,

¹¹ The town I grew up in was among the first to be desegregated in the Southeast US in 1956. Explosions destroyed portions of the high school in what has been reported as protest to desegregation in 1958.

¹² Specific place names have been changed.

¹³ Specific store names have been changed.

dormant but never unused, on the library
shelf of a re-built school.

On the 10th Block of Eddy Street

The smell of piss in public and
a shamble of brown coat, dark skin,
crumbling white shoes, thinning black hair,
deep blue mechanic pants with stains like oil that stink like shit.
He is in a doorway on Eddy Street, San Francisco, summer 1994.

Clinging to the back of mother's white shirt polka dotted with primary colors
I feel uncool and scared, flanked by the protection of older brother and father.
Fourteen and guided by my family, the lost toddler still unsure of object permanence.

Squeeze your eyes shut.
Hold your nose tight.
It does not exist.
It *will* all go away.

Hours earlier we left the hotel room and found shattered glass
surrounding the passenger side of our minivan.

father's brief case gone.
mother's birding binoculars missing.
brother's backpack dumped out.
my world shifted off its axis.

a spinning, chipped bowling ball plunging awkwardly
down a warped alley toward a dysphoric single pin
made of the crystalline veil of my reality once so clear
that I did not know I was within it. Now cracked, fissured.

On the 10th block of Eddy Street, the 14-year-old, glistening, well-knitted, sparkling white safety
net is abrading one razor sharp, humanity-scented, step after another. Each invisible fiber that
was covertly fashioned and holding an identity is weakening and frayed.

I resist and retreat to innocence. A return to the safe sightless person that I was before...
but the smell of piss and powerlessness are too strong.

On the 10th block of Eddy Street,
asleep in a doorway in the San Francisco sun
is a black man with no home.
A specimen of the *other*.
Confrontation with the unknown.

Heart-tree

The ghosts of strange fruit
hang from the Southern tree.
Roots in soil, not pure
but soiled by souls trampled
heavy by soles worked deep.

What compost rot feeds
the tree on which history
clings like decaying
moss that mythically faces
North? A direction,

That provides clarity
to an identity. An idealized direction
of intention and growth. The destination
of underground railroads and
economic success. Hearts yearning

for freedom and racing up
the limbs and boughs of American
ladders of success promised to all
but granted to the privileged few
that can step past the orchard's walls.

To say I am from the
South says something
more than I know.
From where does
my heart-tree grow?

Intone My White Body

I intone my white body as a sunburned citadel;
reverent to bright gods whose gaze lights
my skin on fire; bringing whiteness
to color and exposing nerve endings

to the slightest of disturbances. My vivid self, seen in
mirrors on the normalized pages of glossy magazine
windows to wealth; a vision of purity labeled throughout time.
A story taken for truth and rancid with liars and lies. What am I to do

with this body? Hands that ache from clinched fists that are
muscle weary and cracked from what ... hard work? In truth,
my hands know no thousand cuts; know no centuries of
weariness or daily combat fatigue. No visible scars of labored history,

false hopes, ancestral loss. What do you that I oppress see on me?
What white quality personified by privileges made corporeal?
What external protective layer that I wrap so tightly in?
What hope is there in the recognition of skin-deep difference?

What do I see when I peel back the skin and find myself faceless?
Those fleeting moments of vulnerability and humility.
Faceless and skinless we are the same.
But our faces and skin make a difference.

First Fall, 2004

On the morning of my first day
in the classroom,
I wonder little dumb things:

...Will they like me?
...How will I introduce myself?
...Does my hair look funny?
...Is my fly zipped up?

In the afternoon, short weeks later and
three years after the fall¹⁴,
I wonder things I never thought I would:

...How much time does it take to develop hate?
...How much hate does it take to believe someone should die?
...Where do students learn bigoted names?

In the darkness of midnight, despair creeps
In on the edges of my cowardice.
I wonder about the realities I face:

...Can I actually teach like this?
...Where do I protect my heart?

Then, almost morning again, I see
more about myself than about them
and I wonder one more thing:

...Am I brave enough to be the teacher they need me to be?

¹⁴ I began teaching in the Fall of 2004 3 years after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that killed nearly 3,000 people.

After the Tsunami¹⁵

tsu·na·mi (t)soo'namē/ *noun*

a long high sea wave caused by an earthquake, submarine landslide, or other disturbance.

I can see the wave on repeat, one news feed
rhythmically following another; the wall of water washing over
streets, barriers, tables, shoes, shins, mouths.
The mud brown rush taking young and old, stationary and fleeing.

For you, 14 and comfortable, the perspective must be difficult to see;
happening half a world away where you rationalize catastrophe as justice
because “that place is overcrowded anyway.”
Adolescent bravado that excuses so much.

I try to bring it back here; closer to home with terms, numbers, places
that you know, you relate too. In Tennessee, the scientists say there used to
be an ocean. Yes, one right here, full of tiny creatures swimming circles
around each other just like teenagers in the lunchroom.

Some seeking a place to sit and eat. Others seeking a mate.
But, I continue, the scientists also say that the lunchroom plates
shifted and one sucked under the other. The potential energy,
built up over time and WHAM *clap* (you jump)

the earthquake and the tsunami wave
letting loose in a quick kinetic spasm. And
the ocean lurched and the little creatures lurched
and innocently washed up on the rocks to die, drowning in the sun.

Your shock isn't quite what I had intended as, you laugh
comically and grotesquely huge. Did the little creatures know what hit them?
Did their forming minds register the catastrophe?
Were they understanding how much chaos existed around them?

I wonder if a tiny creature teacher could have been there to explain
better how we are all connected. Would you have listened knowing
that you were already being swept away lost and tumbling
in a great white wave, you never saw coming?

¹⁵ The Indian Ocean Tsunami on Dec. 26, 2004 killed approximately 228,000 people.

The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide

April 7, 2014

Today, we gather to read your photo
in our sacred classroom protected
by impotent statistics dismissible
in our nearly all-white hands.
An offering of connection:

100 days and 1 million dead
Too many rapes to count.
20 years and 7,700 miles away.

It is an aged photo, 20 years long ago.
The gray church altar and white adobe walls,
brown floor covered with decaying reeds,
ashen skulls on dry wooden shelves.
In the foreground, you brandish a toothy smile.

I think you look tired of survival and exhaustion.
The skulls, jawless and fractured, simper in the
blurred background, vulnerable and coy.

Gathered around us the vestments of learning
warm our shoulders as we treat your image as literature.
This novel lesson taught by this teacher one day in a year.
Some of us misinterpret your smile as joy or happiness,
the feeling that can bring us an absolution for guilt.

It was before our time. No way
those ridiculous numbers are real.
Bullshit media and all their hype.

But what am I here: teacher, preacher, reporter, martyr?
Rescuer of the future led astray if they claim they never learned?
20 years from now, what will this picture of you be? Skulls
losing force and magnitude, your smile exploited as a piece of
propaganda for heavy-handed preening by *savior* teachers like me.

White Standing Stones

Circular and impressive.
Embedded in time by efficient
practiced hands that dug deep
deeper deepest into turf that
becomes not quite bedrock;
close enough to insinuate immobility.

For my ancestors, ancestors, ancestors,
the gaps were more important than the stones.
Each open place marking the important events
that fed their beliefs and planted their crops.
Solstices, moons, the equinox when the
light and the dark were equal and celebrated.

As I sit at the midpoint looking out,
each rock is a spindle handle for
turning and churning the spokes
and gears that manufacture wealth,
value words, judge beauty, validate
history, and open up options.

Beginning to circle the rocks rumble 'round
a rotating consciousness keeping
the white façade pure and unblemished.
My vision blurs as the stones accelerate and spin
in a Muybridge¹⁶ gallop that movies the world
into a whitewashed nickelodeon I can no longer

recognize as an invention. The white immobile rocks
made more important, more invisible
than the brilliant spaces. I miss the verdant,
vibrant world, that exists beyond.
What arrests the repetitive spin exposing
the gaps in the white standing stones?

¹⁶ Eadweard Muybridge took sequential photos a horse galloping to produce the first motion picture in 1878.

Falling the Center Apart¹⁷

I don't think about gravity
that pulls me to the center of earth
until I see fireflies defy it.
The magic of bright weightless flashes
each the smallest astronaut escaping
the surly bonds of earth,
insect's hands outstretched toward the
bright moon and the face of God.
I capture them in jars to watch
in dreamscape sequences in my bedroom.
Glimpses of drifting and delicious
flights to freedom during the
euphoric fanciful warm nights
when I long to hang on to
sleep for one heartbeat more.
Endless floats away from the laws
of Newton's apples.

Does the vision of myself go the same way?
Bounded like a firefly in a jar in summer.
Bioluminescent blinks going on and off,
on and off at seemingly random intervals
all to attract a mate, sustain a specimen of
a person I once was. Gravity depends upon
a center that holds us invisibly spellbound to it.
Miss that grounding force that we cannot see
and we can only acknowledge it when
suddenly it is gone, and we attempt to
brightly take flight.

But here in my bedroom after I wake,
in the morning's bright sunlight all the living lights
have blinked off and off and the fireflies are all dead.
Cut off from a center around which to spin.
Was it the futile and furtive performance of
the doomed and the damned?
Nowhere else to go but away.

¹⁷ This poem's title comes from this quote from J. Warren (1999), "Rather than making the center bigger, including more voices and more cultures, whiteness studies demands a critical examination of the center in the hope that the center will fall apart." (p. 197).

A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz

My office is my Emerald city, palace of power.
The curated space to project a Wizard of Oz level of influence,
the curtain keenly hidden just around the corner.

When you entered off the yellow brick road, I anticipated your cautiousness.
I anticipated putting you at ease, but only just a little, impressing you with
smoke, flames, and psychological teacher weaponry targeted; intentional and systematic.

Sitting down you showed me hardened and aware body language. No cowardly lion,
certainly, no scarecrow, and the tin man's axe was dull next to the knife-like
keen of your straight back, direct dark stare, and wicked witch defeating manner.

I swelled my inner teacher up into my shoulders and cast with great fanfare
my bright white shadow over you expecting you to be defensive, and quail
affronted, incredulous, dumbfounded, the passive Dorothy, just wanting to go home.

"I am not seeing as much effort as I think you could be putting forward," I said, projecting
all the experienced teacher wizardry I could muster. Your locked look arrested me.
"You are right," you said. "It's hard to put in effort when your teacher is as racist as you are."

Wizardry and artifice are masks over vulnerabilities, insecurities,
and realities that I have no desire to see. In brilliant Technicolor, you show me
in black and white, the shamed face charlatan I am, the curtain torn down.

You are the granter of the greatest of gifts. A bravery that I don't possess.
A bold heart that takes a chance on me. Thinking enough of me to risk much.
Seeing a truth in me that I did not know was there.

Teacher Coward

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when one more
shooting violently shifted the tectonic
plates under humanity's foundation.

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when I teach
with my humanistic credo on my
crisply laundered white shirt sleeve.

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when tears
as a parent, teacher, man, genuinely
build behind my invisible privilege.

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when my cowardice
to take a stand is on full display.
Who do I condemn today and who do I support?

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when I weigh
my power on blind justice's false set of scales:
her vision covered by a bright white hood.

It's a Tuesday, after a Monday
after another Tuesday when all I want
to do is be better, braver, and bolder
but fear holds me back. Teacher coward.

Three, I Must Stand Up.

Minneapolis burns after the murder of George Floyd.
no one has yet been held accountable for killing Breona Taylor.
Three white men are now in jail for slaying Ahmaud Aubrey¹⁸.

I am sitting on my Tennessee front porch, quietly listening
to the drumbeats and distant chants on the main street
three blocks away; cries for breath. Screams of “hands up
don't shoot” and justice and goodness and rightness. Quiet,
I am sitting. Subtle movements betray me, eyes not fixed, head tilting
three inches further each heartbeat; nerves on standby fight or flight
ready. Fear is the default I blame on my lizard brain, some cultural
mutation imbedded into my tribalized DNA. From my secure porch my
three faces look out over the echoing streets pulsing with the mantras.

The teacher looks out and sees possibility: lesson plans and assignments,
discussion topics and follow up questions. Engage in a comparison of
three current events and link them to how we are living our lives.

The parent looks out and sees danger: protect the children from the difficult
to explain, the words and concepts they won't be able to understand for what,
three more years? Thirteen more years? Ignorance of it must be bliss.

The coward looks out and willfully sees nothing. Because seeing nothing means
nothing is there. Eyes wide and shut are permission to ignore it. Move blithely
three steps forward and look back surprised that there was a problem.

Quietly, I am sitting on my porch. Listening. Hearing. Feeling, for the first time,
the chest deep pound of drums, hearts beating out rhythms of truth,
three beats, then three more, the endless, beating staccato.

Sitting passive and quiet is a betrayal. The best I can be is better than I was.
To each face of me I turn, defiant and intentional. Aggressive and critical.
Three visions that I allow to limit and define me. I must stand up.

¹⁸ George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis, MN police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020. Breona Taylor was killed in her apartment home on March 13, 2020, by Louisville, KY police officers serving a warrant. Ahmaud Arbery was killed in Glynn Co. GA, by Travis McMichael, one of three white pursuers, while jogging on February 23, 2020.

I Can Breathe... Why that Matters, April 20, 2021

After the verdict¹⁹

I exhaled long and slow
and felt, from the souls of my feet, a
deep lightheadedness rise up my body.

A floating feeling as on air. The next breath
came and shuddering, my lungs filled out
and expanded beyond the pressure
of a knee to the back of my neck.

For that breath, I feel guilt and shame.
Because I enjoy the oxygen expanding
the wet alveoli of my lungs
and the beat of my heart rushing

life filling blood through my body. The oxygen
moves from lungs, by blood, to brain and muscle.
Each a part of a system we all partake in. Muscles for
action and activation; strong for resistance

and creation. Brain for interpretation and response; nerves
firing explosions across synaptic gaps in active,
kinetic hope-filled exchanges. Through permeable cell structures
the oxygen penetrates deeply and changes DNA.

In that breath's moment, I surge a restless energy
that is life; for I can breathe, and that matters
as long as I use it for more than myself.

¹⁹ On April 20th, 2021, for the murder of George Floyd, Derek Chauvin was found guilty on three counts: unintentional second-degree murder; third-degree murder; and second-degree manslaughter.

Gift of the Ghost

To my students the next teachers.

My ghosts linger all around, hanging quietly and casually
at your shoulders whispering gifts to you.

Each specter of me is a veiled image in a dusty mirror
that reflects honestly who I am.

The ghosts gift you my white sheet,
without eye holes to let you see clearly.

The ghosts gift you vaporous hopes
exhaled, acrid and stale, out of my lungs.

The ghosts gift you my perpetual fears
that haunt me during the daytime.

The ghosts gift you impenetrable stone marble
challenges that I was too scared to confront.

The ghosts gift you bridges of faith
that I trust you are willing to cross.

The ghosts gift you my fervent dreams
that one day you will forget the worst parts of me.

The ghosts gift you meaningless tangible things
that ultimately, mean nothing.

But, standing here idly teaching, I want you to know;
not all gifts given must be received.

The ghosts I gift you are painful and kind.

The ghosts I gift you are true and false.

The ghosts I gift you are dangerous and brave.

The ghosts I gift you are encumbered by my limitations.

The ghosts that you leave mustn't be the same as mine.

Clark Kent Is the Real Hero

Clark Kent is the real hero.
Mild mannered and quiet, writing a truth
on the pages of the *Daily Planet* and
giving words to shape the narrative of
the subtle and sincere world, that is. Superman's
covert costume changes actually, are better
realized in reverse. Discarding the protective
symbols and spit curl; removing the iconic cape,
the boots, losing the 'humble' bravado. Going back
into the telephone booth and coming out
bespeckled, bland suited, simplified, flawed.

He is not actually incognito anymore. His powers
are of identity and honesty; the self-assured knowledge
that is clear eyed, forward looking, and patiently aware
that there is no link between perfection and being good.
As he sits down to write about the latest exploits of Superman,
Clark's vision is clear. The next story must be truer than
it was yesterday. A constant cycle of revision and
retelling, decentered, and without capes and boots.

Power Erodes Like Granite

Let me be the freezing water
seeping into the cracks,
crevices to crystallize and expand
fissure and fracture. Let me be erosion's
slow agent of destructive purpose.

Let me break down the white walled
mountain sides, an avalanche, a rockslide
that obliterates old highways and
worn trailways to make new
paths with new destinations.

Let me be the new water in spring
that melts and flows into clear
pools of life, sources
of transformation, growth, and rebirth.
A life source for change and resurrection.

Let me clear each new rock to expose
the new cracks. Allowing new water to run
deep. New fissures form and allow
deeper rupturing to grow to greater depths.
Like granite, power erodes slowly.

The Beauty of Asymmetry

It's the day after my 40th birthday
and I notice even more as I
shave; slack white skin that
used to be taut; wrinkles that
used to be tinnier; weariness that
used to be tinged with delightful regrets.

Little is hidden in the mirror.
Rouge white hairs doing more
than peeking out among the once brilliant
red beard bristles. Strange foreign hairs
in new places or at least newly making their
victory of existence noticeable to the world.

In this reflection, a new comfort presents itself.
The asymmetry of left and right is more
nuanced than before. My left ear
rising a little higher than my right when I smile.
The mole on my right cheek tinged
with a new brown now different than my eyebrows.

I am not a uniform shade of myself from yesterday.

There is new beauty in asymmetry. Seeing
change where there was once the perception
of uniformity and silence; blissful ignorance. Noticing
newness that recognizes difference and values
distinction where there was once the belief that only
equality did exist.

Peace in the explanation of self as always growing,
even as I creak and shrink; grow weary and tired.
A happy exhaustion of noticing and acknowledging
that not all things need to be aligned to be better than
yesterday.

Chapter 4 Concluding Comment

Constellations are complex socially constructed pictures in the night sky that are as unique as each viewer that sees them. The nuances of geographic location, viewing equipment, cultural connections, and external conditions all shape the stories we see written in the celestial bodies above us. Each stargazer creates a new tale every time they venture out into the night and stare up at the sky. Such is true of the poetic narrative that has been presented in this chapter. I have presented a set of stars, that each represent moments, experiences, emotions, themes that all contribute to the story that is a (re)development, a shaping of a new myth, to better understand my identity as a person in a white body. As the reader of this story, you participate in the unique creation of a constellation that is distinctly your own and reflective of your location, viewing equipment, cultural values, and external conditions.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will summarize some of the specific findings from this poetic narrative that are vital to understanding how I see my role as a white teacher educator on a journey to an antiracist pedagogical practice. In these findings, I will highlight how the narrative devices of setting, character, and theme contribute to a deeper and more complex understanding of the journey to (re)develop my white identity. Then, I will address the emotions across the narrative arc that show how my emotional responses to exposing and seeing myself as a white person evolved or were revealed. And, in the last part of the summary of findings section, I will position the experiences in the poems along the progression of Helms (2020) and Howard's (2016) white identity development models by sharing specific instances of each phase along the path of the narrative. After exploring these elements of the autoethnography, I will return to the central research question and sub-questions of this dissertation and connect my findings specifically to the purpose of this study. Through these elements of Chapter 5, I make

use of my own geographic location, viewing equipment, cultural connections, and environmental conditions to clarify the constellation I see when I observe my white identity (re)development story.

Chapter 5: Findings, Analysis, and Conclusions

In this chapter I will share a summary of findings from the evocative autoethnography presented in Chapter 4. This summary of findings will identify and explore several noteworthy facets of this narrative description of my understanding of the transformative process to (re)develop my identity as a white teacher educator. Following the summary of findings, I will share a detailed discussion of the salient and consistent elements of the autoethnographic narrative that relate to my research questions. Then, I will discuss the limitations that organize the boundaries of this dissertation's scope as it attempts to add to the existing literature around white identity (re)development. Finally, I will share specific implications of this research on future attempts to better understand and address the on-going reflective process necessary to challenge and confront whiteness in teacher education through white identity (re)development.

Summary of Findings

The narrative shared in Chapter 4 is a story of change, challenge, and recognition of the complex relationship among my understandings of myself as a person who is white and my role as a teacher educator who is white. The narrative is, on its own, a unique set of findings about my process of dismantling and exposing whiteness (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014, Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Muncey, 2010). However, in this section I will share some additional specific unique findings that help further clarify the ways in which the narrative works to allow me to challenge and change my white identity as a teacher educator. These additional discoveries show how the narrative design, the emotional evolution/revelations, and the progression of identity development relative to Helms (2020) and Howard's (2016) white identity models exist within this autoethnography and better clarify the process of (re)developing my white identity as a teacher educator who is white.

Narrative Design

In the “shaping the myth” step of the methodology (discussed in Chapter 3) the original poems that derived from the epiphanies were crafted into more specific representations of the emotional and identity (re)development elements of this narrative. As well, in this same methodological step, the poems were organized in a plot arc that tells the story from introduction through the rising action, into the climax, and then through the falling action into the conclusion (Figure 3.9 in Appendix B). Within this arc of action, the specific settings, themes, and character details are representative of telling and influential details that flesh out more about this narrative’s connection to the emotions and the (re)development of my white identity as a teacher educator (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Settings. Over the course of the narrative, the physical settings in which the principal action of the poems take place follows a general progression from more public spaces, through indefinable/universal spaces to more private/intimate spaces. As well, the articulation of time as a function of setting is used to better share and interpret some of the poems’ influences. By understanding the movement among these settings, the intentional interaction of reader with the plot can be more specifically explored.

Setting: Place. At the beginning of the narrative in the poems, *Ignorance is A Certain Kind of Bliss* and *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, the physical settings are publicly accessible and shared by large groups of people. The location specific references in and around the hometown in *Ignorance is A Certain Kind of Bliss* present known and knowable places that the wider community have connections with. Although the specific names of locations linked to this town (“Bland River”, “Thompson’s drug store”, and “Workman’s Outlet”) were changed to mask the town’s identity; the fact that proper names are being used makes these references

specific/non-generic, allowing them to be more connected to the reader's frame of reference. Every reader has noteworthy geographic features or specific stores/landmarks that make their own lived experiences unique. While the location in *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, is much more specific to one particular location in San Francisco, CA, the sensory (sight, smell) descriptions make this public space, and how the narrator understands it, comparatively different from the hometown in *Ignorance is A Certain Kind of Bliss*. While both settings represent public spaces the contrast in how they are presented connects to the developing understanding of the narrator within the introductory portion of the plot.

As the action of the plot rises toward the climax the setting moves out of totally public spaces and into locations with more physical limitations. *First Fall, 2004* presents the first poem that takes place within a classroom, introducing a space that is specific to the intimate interactions between teacher and student while being reflective of, but not physically open to, the public. This setting continues through *After the Tsunami* and *On the 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide* as the classroom is a location for the teacher to come into direct conflict with the students perspectives on larger influential events that are being intentionally brought into the learning space (e.g. the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks, Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, and the 1994 genocide in Rwandan). The settings of these three poems focus the reader into the classroom space and directly show my actions as a teacher foreshadowing more consideration of my role in teacher education later in the plot.

In the poems that are part of the rising action and climax of the narrative, *Falling the Center Apart*, *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*, and *Three, I Must Stand Up*, the settings become much more personal. Each of these poems have events/actions that break a barrier from a public space into more directed and personal spaces directly linked to projections of my

identity. For example, in *Falling the Center Apart* and *Three, I Must Stand Up* the setting is brought to my home (e.g. “in dreamscape sequences in my bedroom” and “my Tennessee front porch”, respectively) which make the engagement and understanding of whiteness in both of these contexts much more personal. While still a more personal space, the setting of *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz* is noteworthy as I use a specific metaphor of “My office is my Emerald City, palace of power” to bring out the thematic concept that the personal space of my office is one of performance and theatrics, referencing the charlatan *Wizard of Oz*²⁰ character, rather than an authentic or honest space. As a direct part of the rising action and climax of the narrative the use of physical setting in these poems sets up the falling action that shares more of the disruption of these spaces on the way toward the plot’s resolution.

The poems that develop the falling action of the narrative have physical settings that are much less specific and defined. This quality of these poems suggests that at this point in the transformative (re)development process my understanding of my identity is broader in its reach and scope. In the poems *I Can Breathe... Why That Matters*, *Clark Kent is the Real Hero*, and *Power Erodes Like Granite*, no specific place details are shared allowing the considerations to be applicable in any context in which a reader sees them. In these poems, I am understanding my identity (re)development to be an internalized part of my lived experience and therefore applicable in whatever environments I find myself. *Gift of the Ghost* does not explicitly state that the action of the poem takes place in a classroom space; however, it does note that the interactions in the poem happen between the students and “My ghosts [that] linger all around, hanging quietly and casually/at your [students] shoulders”. Therefore, this is an on-going exchange between “my ghosts” and my students that could be in any space in which they are

²⁰ Wizard of Oz from the movie *Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) and the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900).

haunted by those concepts which I taught them. The lack of a specific setting contributes to the overall goal of this poem to communicate my understanding of the influence that my white identity can have on the future teachers I work with long after they leave my classroom.

The final poem, *The Beauty of Asymmetry*, takes place in the most vulnerable and private space of the entire narrative, looking into my own bathroom mirror. This setting shows that the entire narrative, from the openly broad and public sphere of the first poems through the increasingly private spaces of classrooms, and then out into the less-definable spaces, has all led to the most intimate and personally exposed location. This very private space, presented without ornamentation and purposefully mundane, lets the resolution of the broader plot come to a close for both the reader and me. While I am the protagonist in the “reflection” of the mirror, there is intention in the generic nature of the bathroom mirror and location that is identifiable/relatable to all readers. The setting at the close of narrative is both mine and the readers.

Setting: Time. The other element of setting that should be mentioned here is time. Generally, the events shared in the narrative take place in chronological order (See epiphany epoch in Figure 3.2 in Appendix B). However, it is noteworthy that in the “shaping the new myth” stage of the methodology, chronological order of epiphanic events was not considered a vital component in crafting the narrative arc. For example, the epiphany that generated the poem *Gift of the Ghost*, was documented at the same time as the epiphany for the poem *Ignorance is a Certain Kind Bliss*. In their contributions to the narrative, however, they share details about two very different identity related concepts which place them at opposite ends of the narrative arc. Another example of the consideration of time is the relationship between significant cultural events that took place and their influence on the progression of the narrative. There are six poems (*Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*, *First Fall, 2004*, *After the Tsunami*, *The 20th*

Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, Three, I Must Stand Up, I Can Breathe... Why That Matters) that directly link to significant events that engaged me in a specific process of understanding my relationship with my white identity as a teacher/teacher educator. These events are shared in chronological order (*The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide* takes place in 2014) as my connection to these specific moments progressed over that time.

Themes across the narrative arc. In interpreting the data in an autoethnography, Chang (2008) defines a theme as a pattern of concepts that “describes relationships among various elements” (p. 132). Across the narrative arc of my poetic autoethnography two significant themes are present that link to the emotional evolution/revelation and progression of identity development discussed later. First, I will discuss the theme of visibility/invisibility that is used across the narrative and either shares willful attempts to keep truths about whiteness hidden and/or exhibits circumstances in which the realities related to my white identity (re)development are being intentionally exposed and made obvious. Second, I will discuss the theme of breaking down/deconstruction as a natural process that is described and connected to the emotional and identity (re)development elements. Both of these themes further develop this narrative’s intention to understand how I see myself in relationship to the oppressive structures of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege as well as the implications of that relationship on my identity (re)development as a teacher educator who is white.

Visibility/invisibility. Leonardo (200), McIntosh (1988 & 1989) and Applebaum (2003) among others, identify the qualities of whiteness and white privilege that allow for them to be largely invisible and hidden from those they benefit. In my narrative, the theme of visibility/invisibility is present in a consistent pattern of images and comparisons that function to show that I have both benefitted from whiteness by actively hiding it, and that I have in some

instances worked to seek ways to make whiteness visible in new ways of thinking and acting. To identify these thematic patterns more easily I utilized NVivo coding software and sought references in the narrative to “seeing self”, “ghosts”, “hiding”, “mask”, “mirrors”, and “reflections” (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020).

In the first poem of the narrative, *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*, the theme of visibility/invisibility is seen in “A white-washed state of existence that / blankets the world under a cloak of homogeneity” that builds the connection between the physical location and dominant thinking about whiteness I encountered growing up. Whiteness was ever-present in my early upbringing, but it was hidden and cloaked by the perception of sameness of opportunity and privilege among all people (Amico, 2015; hooks, 2014; Gillborn, 2005; Thompson, 2003; Solomona et al., 2005). In this poem, the theme of invisibility blends into the conceptual idea of the normalized nature of whiteness in American society (Gillborn, 2005; hooks, 2014; Thompson, 2003). From my earliest perceptions of the racialized *other*, anything that was different meant that it was wrong. In effect, my identity was cloaked/hidden by the seemingly blissful idea that the world was a white uniform ideal always “at arm’s reach”. This poem’s portrayal of whiteness and my white privilege as being hidden and invisible is set in contrast to the next poem, *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*. In this poem that is the second of the narrative, I am very viscerally confronted with the fear and emotional discomfort of no longer being able to “return to the safe sightless person that I was before” and have my first visible “Confrontation with the unknown.” This confrontation sets in motion the rising action of the plot as I begin the process of seeing more intentionally my own white identity, benefits of white privilege, and enactments of white supremacy.

Within the narrative's climax the extended metaphor in the poem *Thank You Note from the Wizard of Oz* takes visibility/invisibility in a slightly different direction. In this poem, I compare myself and my role as a teacher educator to the Wizard of Oz from the movie *Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) and the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900). I, as the narrator, begin the poem by embodying the power and showmanship of the charlatan wizard with "the curtain keenly hidden just around the corner." This character development detail shows that at this point in the poem, the association of my white identity with my role as a teacher educator is one of a performance that comes with the benefits of power and influence over my students. However, as this poem progresses the interaction with power and invisibility changes. As the student of color antagonist confronts me by directly calling me out for being a "teacher [who] is as racist as you are" there is a shift in my own understanding of the "Wizardry and artifice" I employ. In the concluding stanzas of this poem the rupture (similar to the one occurring in *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*), represents a recognition and acknowledgement that there has been an intense shift in my perceptions. In this instance, being told "in black and white, the shamed face charlatan I am," precedes a final understanding that "the curtain [has been] torn down" and I am changed by this moment. Narratively, this poem is an early indication of some of the revelations of the climax of the plot. It presents my first very real steps toward a more honest connection with the way in which I have enacted and performed whiteness as a teacher educator and a move toward becoming willing to acknowledge whiteness' influence. This idea is shared in the last line of this poem in which I thank the student for "Seeing a truth in me that I did not know was there."

In the falling action of the narrative, the poem *Gift of the Ghost* continues with the theme of visibility/invisibility as I am more directly recognizing and confronting the permanence of my

white identity as it is expressed through my teaching of teachers. Described as “ghosts...hanging quietly and casually/at your shoulders” whiteness is described as existing continuously around the pre-service teachers as a passive yet persistent set of ghosts. Each of these specters is a different “veiled image in a dusty mirror” that reflects a truth, whether positive or negative, I am seeing about my unique white identity. At this point in the plot, I am visualizing my white identity as a developing and not a singular or monolithic concept, but one with multiple facets and aspects that both share good and negative attributes with the teachers I teach (Leonardo, 2002). Important though in this recognition, is that I am making clear that there is more than one way to view this aspect of myself (Howard, 2016). Each ghost’s “gift” is detailed in the seven, two-line statements and shows my mixed and conflicted understandings of the visibility of whiteness at this point in the narrative. In making these ghosts visible and recognizable I acknowledge their existence to my students and myself. By making the ghosts visible, I am empowering my students to be able to see them and realize that “not all gifts given must be received.” By rendering the “gifts of the ghosts” as something accessible and tangible I enable my pre-service teacher students to challenge and not passively accept the influence my own enactment of whiteness and my white privilege has on their teaching. I support the hope that when they teach the ghosts they “leave mustn’t be the same as mine.”

Two poems near the end of the narrative address the themes of visibility/invisibility by relating the concepts of what I am seeing in white identity at this point to an idealized white person I want to be. In *Clark Kent is the Real Hero* I challenge the perception that there is or could be some super-human white person who exists as a paragon example of the ‘good’ or ‘best’ white person (Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015). In this poem’s exploration, Clark Kent’s nature as the “Mild mannered and quiet,” reporter whose task is to write “truth / on the

pages of the Daily Planet” is one to be praised above the “protective / symbols” that shield his alter-ego, Superman. Seeing the hero in reverse lets me question the performance of allyship and the bravado of claiming to be a “good” white person (Helms, 2020; Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015). Rather, I make visible through the reverse process of “covert costume changes” that there is “no link between perfection and being good”. This revelation is that within me there is a struggle, a process of acknowledging, truthfully and accurately “the latest exploits of Superman” while maintaining that I will never come to a finished place (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016). At this point in the narrative, I am seeing myself as a personal truth teller who keeps the ostentatious and performative, superficial white savior contained, but not without critique or scrutiny. This last acknowledgment of my flawed, work-in-progress status precedes the last thematic exploration of visibility/invisibility in *Beauty of Asymmetry* that is the final poem of the narrative.

Scenically taking place in the most intimate space of the whole narrative, the last poem’s action is bound by the bathroom mirror that provides no protection from truth. In the reflected image, I see both flaws and a peaceful acceptance of change and growth. As I inspect myself further, I make visible the physical imperfections that I had once considered overwhelmingly negative and find “a new comfort” in the internal imperfections that show imbalance and asymmetry. The poem shifts from the physical to the internal/emotional with the line, “I am not a uniform shade of myself from yesterday.” The remaining two stanzas turn exclusively inward and echo several concepts from poems throughout the narrative, that show that I have, through this process of making my white identity fully visible, come to see that “not all things need to be aligned to be better than / yesterday.”

The natural process of destruction. Garvey & Ignatiev (1997), Leonardo (2013), Love (2019), Moon & Flores (2000), among other theorists, suggest that a defining feature of white abolitionist pedagogy is the un-making or deconstruction of whiteness. This concept supports a vision of reducing/eliminating the power of whiteness from the inside as white people reject privileges and break down those core ideas that center whiteness as a hegemonic practice; thus, rendering whiteness' control obsolete (Chubback, 2004; Cole 2012; Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997). Linked to these notions of abolitionist thinking, there is a consistent theme of a slow and natural destructive process that works to erode and crack elements of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege (symbolically presented as rocks/stones) within my experience to (re)develop my white identity. To identify this thematic pattern more easily I utilized NVivo coding software and sought references to natural examples of destruction including references to such terms as (but not limited to), “tectonic plates”, “rocks”, “stones”, “fissures”/ “fissuring”, and “erosion”/ “eroding” (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020).

Early in the narrative, these destructive forces are linked to moments of personal understanding that are uncomfortable and disruptive to how I historically viewed myself. In the poem, *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, the destructive ideas of “cracked, fissured” and “abrading” are all relative to the uncomfortable feeling of vulnerability I experienced encountering poverty, crime, and homelessness associated with “a black man with no home”. In this poem, the destruction is a force that realigns the idealized vision of the world that I possessed by forcing me to confront “A specimen of the *other*” in a way that develops a new, yet tarnished, understanding of the world around me. This vision of the world in which I am now living, is further developed by the framing of deconstruction as a force that precedes rebirth and creation through the image of decomposition in the next poem of the narrative, *Heart-tree*.

In this poem, I work to understand the growth of my identity as a white person living in the Southeastern United States that is aware of the violence-filled past toward people of color. I share this connection through references to racially motivated lynching in the allusion “ghosts of strange fruit”²¹ and the images of the ground “soiled by souls trampled / heavy by soles worked deep” that implies the burial of generations of enslaved peoples in this region. From these connections, I ask, “What compost rot feeds / the tree on which history / clings like decaying / moss that mythically faces / North?” This question acknowledges that the literal soil on which I have lived my life is the decayed remains of people of color as well as a contrived belief that there exists the “North” which meritocratically functions as “an idealized direction / of intention and growth.” I am attempting in this poem, to rationalize how I can understand my own growth and privilege as a white person with the physical destruction and decay of people of color (Helms, 2020). The last question of this poem, “From where does / my heart-tree grow?” is a stark reminder that I have benefited from the destructive violence done to people of color and an attempt for me to begin to resolve the meaning of that history on my own lived experience and identity (re)development.

In the rising action of the narrative, the theme of the natural process of destruction is addressed in two different ways, as a common bond among all people and as a force/process to be prevented. In the poem *After the Tsunami*, images and reflections on destruction are used to contextualize my role as a teacher in challenging bias among students by attempting to explain a devastating natural disaster in terms I think will have an emotional influence on their beliefs. I use vivid descriptions of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami’s destructive effects, “the wall of water washing over / streets, barriers, tables, shoes, shins, mouths”, as a device to evoke empathy for

²¹ This is a reference to the poem/song of the same name written by Abel Meeropol (1937) and sung notably by Billie Holiday, among others.

the victims of this natural disaster. My connection to this horrific event is not as a firsthand observer of the destruction, but as a teacher attempting to draw students into connecting themselves with this disaster that happened, “half a world away”. This poem’s connection to the theme of destruction is one of understanding that there is a shared humanity in destructive forces among all peoples, and that when we can acknowledge that connection, we can recognize that we are all “already being swept away lost and tumbling / in a great white wave, you never saw coming?”

In contrast to the shared experience of destruction in *After the Tsunami*, there are two poems in the rising action that establish an attempt to keep destruction from occurring. In *White Standing Stones* and *Falling the Center Apart*, destructive forces are kept at bay by the immobility or consistency of established systems. In *White Standing Stones*, the white rocks are described as “Embedded in time” and “not quite bedrock; close enough to insinuate immobility” having resisted destruction. In this poem’s thematic understanding, the white standing stones are viewed as being fixed, “pure and unblemished” and thus immune from destruction. This immunity is so totalized, that the narrator struggles to see past the stones viewing them as “a Muybridge²² gallop that movies the world / into a whitewashed nickelodeon I can no longer // recognize as an invention.” In this poem, the indestructible white stones have become more important than the “verdant, / vibrant world, that exists beyond” and the theme of the natural process of destruction exists as a question of, if it is possible for that immobility to be overcome.

In the next poem, *Falling the Center Apart*, the destructive element shared is the natural death of the fireflies that have been captured in a jar and cut off from the grounding force of gravity. In this poem, the fireflies exist as symbols of the emotional discomfort and distress that

²² Eadweard Muybridge took sequential photos a horse galloping to produce the first motion picture in 1878

comes to a white person from the dismantling of the whiteness they have been largely unaware of. In the act of being “Cut off from a center around which to spin” the destructive process feels like the “futile and furtive performance of / the doomed and the damned”. This damaging loss of the gravitation force that holds me to whiteness is being lamented and avoided as I wonder about the larger and troubling outcome of only, “Nowhere else to go but away.”

In the climax of the narrative, the theme of the natural process of destruction is less prominent than the theme of visibility/invisibility explored previously. However, there is one specific image of this theme that should be addressed because of its connection to the overall plot of the narrative. In the first stanza of the poem *Teacher Coward*, I establish that the poem is a response to “one more / shooting [that] violently shifted the tectonic / plates under humanity’s foundation.” The image here echoes back to my teaching intentions and the images of *After the Tsunami* and foreshadows the slow but powerful forces of destruction that will be shared in the poem, *Power Erodes Like Granite*. This image is placed within the pivotal moments of the narrative’s climax and shows a shift in how I am understanding my identity in relationship to the significant experiences that are, at this point, unsettling me and compelling me to reassess who I am as a white teacher educator. While neither of the next two poems in the narrative have specific reference to a natural process of destruction, they both show the effects of the accumulated process of destruction up to this point.

Three, I Must Stand Up and *I Can Breathe... Why That Matters, April 20, 2021*, show specific actions/reactions that have come about due to the destructive processes that have been shared in the narrative up to this point. In *Three, I Must Stand Up*, after passively sitting and listening to the “drumbeats and distant chants on the main street” and assessing my response through “my / three faces”, I conclude that, “sitting passive and quiet is a betrayal.” This

revelation is in stark contrast to the distant and questioning teacher in, *First Fall, 2004* who rhetorically asks, “Am I brave enough to be the teacher they need me to be?” and the teacher who describes himself as “preening” in *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*. I am responding even more directly to the process of deconstructing my white identity in *I Can Breathe... Why That Matters, April 20, 2021*, as I am placing my voice as an active and intentional agent for change, noting that my breath, “matters / as long as I use it for more than myself.” This movement away from the centered perception of whiteness, as explored in *Falling the Center Apart*, and confronting the emotionally dependent savior mentality questioned in *First Fall, 2004*, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*, and *After the Tsunami* sets up the (re)developed concepts of my white identity that are shared in the falling action and resolution of the narrative.

The final segment of the narrative shows natural destruction actively at work in the poem, *Power Erodes Like Granite*. From a starkly abolitionist tone and perspective, this poem positions me as no longer a passive recipient of the byproducts of a deconstructive process (Chubback, 2004; Cole, 2012; Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997). Rather, I invoke becoming the actual agent of destruction itself by starting each stanza with, “Let me” and detailing paths to be “erosion’s / slow agent of destructive purpose.” This poem’s understanding of destruction is placed in contrast to those elements presented in the introduction and rising action as I am welcoming the disruption of “the white walled / mountain sides” and seeking to be “an avalanche, a rockslide / that obliterates old highways and / worn trailways”. Unlike the discomfort with destruction described in *On the 10 Block of Eddy Street* or *Falling the Center Apart*, the natural process of destruction shared in the resolution of the narrative is being welcomed and celebrated. This destructive process is one that prompts hope, newness, and intentionality to “expose / the new

cracks. Allowing new water to run / deep.” The natural process of destruction has generated a (re)developed white identity that is open and welcoming to the slow erosion of the power that whiteness, white supremacy, white privilege wield.

Character Connected to Narration. Like any story, the narrative of the autoethnography is told through the perceptions and actions of a set of characters who, in one way or another, interact in dramatic tension (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Through the interactions and descriptions of the protagonists and antagonists the plot’s arc is viewable as the tension is described, felt, interpreted, and made accessible to the reader (Denzin, 2014). Throughout the narrative shared in Chapter 4, the interactions among the narrator/protagonist (i.e. “me”, “I” etc) and the varied secondary characters, both as direct antagonists and indirect supporting characters, work to show and explore how I am interacting, reacting, and (re)developing as a white teacher educator. The character development findings described in this section add nuance to how some characters of the narrative contribute to the overall understanding of white identity (re)development explored later in this chapter.

In the first poem that introduces the initial location and thematic position of the plot, the narrative voice in *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss* works to show rather than tell about the narrator in the remaining poems. As a tool to denote to the reader that this poem is linked directly to the author, a footnote is added that identifies that the poem describes, “The town I grew up in”. While the poem’s action is not guided by a central narrative voice, the poem works to zoom in on a particular place and the person/people that are products of that place. For example, as a statement about the mindset of the people in this space, “To be abnormal / here means a quality of foreignness, strangeness / beyond conception” presents the concept that to be different was considered outside the realm of understanding. Likewise, characterization of the

narrator is explored by sharing the passive acceptance of stated ideals (“Boy Scout codes and moral ideals of honor are / never interrogated”) and protection from unsettling questioning about privilege systems (“In the safety / of this blissfulness, power is explained / by coded degree; some things are bad... / to be something different was worse.”). *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss* introduces the reader to the narrator they are being asked to see and connect with, who is a by-product of whiteness and a predominantly white interaction that has contributed to the blissful ignorance of the poem’s title. Through the description of setting, the character of the narrator is visible in a space that has been normalized as, “A calm sea of white blissful fog” and made safe through putting on the mantel of innocence “in crisp / white dress shirts that have been washed / in name brand detergent.” All these details cue the reader that this is, for the narrator being introduced, a normalized place, both physically and psychologically, in which he feels protected by ignorance of the racial *other* (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016).

After the initial introductory poem, the narrator takes on the first-person personal pronouns to show the action of the plot from my specific and limited point-of-view. This places the scope of the descriptions and events that follow directly within the limitations of my experience and/or my beliefs about each experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014; Muncey, 2010). As the narrative progresses and presents interactions with other characters, their links to the larger goals of the story are shared as either supports to the descriptions of specific settings, ideas, or situations or as specific conflict foils for the narrator that compel or prompt some change (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

The supporting characters function in ways that help the reader understand character development, place, and further evolve ideas within the narration. For example, in *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, my family (noted in the second stanza) serve as descriptive examples of

safety and security of place that precede my interaction in the poem with the events that unsettle and fissure my illusionary world view. Noting the presence of my mother, father, and brother all convey the idea of protection while I experience a wholly new level of insecurity and vulnerability. As supports for the narrative's description these characters let me show the connection to innocence and safety that I am feeling disconnected from, which amplifies the feelings of fear, loss and grief that are presented later in the poem.

Supporting characters also work as comparative ideas to clarify or explore a poem's central image or tension. For example, in *My White Standing Stones* the supporting characters of "my ancestors, ancestors, ancestors," offer an alternative perspective from mine in understanding the symbolic stones that are part of the central image of the poem. By bringing in these characters from the past, I can better interpret what the standing stones are representing to me in the present. This comparison would be less effective if there were no point of contrast included.

Another vital grouping of characters in the narrative serve as direct antagonists that alter the course and actions of the narrator/protagonist. In altering my journey each antagonist facilitates specific moments and experiences in which a conflict and/or tension is presented that forces me to change or evolve my thinking and behaviors (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Each antagonist provides a unique conflict to the narrative in which I am forced to work in and through the encounter and come to a decision about my next identity development steps.

In the poems, *First Fall, 2004*, *After the Tsunami*, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*, *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*, and *Gift of the Ghost*, the antagonists are students within a variety of classroom spaces. Students in *First Fall, 2004* and *After the Tsunami* are identified by third person (they, them) and second person (you) pronouns, respectively. In both of these poems, the students exist as antagonists in my high school English language arts

classroom as their viewpoints about devastating world events for people who are culturally different challenge my understanding of my role as their teacher. These poems show how I question my place as a teacher in reacting to their points of view (in *First Fall, 2004*) and how I directly seek to address those points of view when they are dramatically divergent from my own thinking (*After the Tsunami*). These early poems explore confrontations that prompt more introspective thinking about the choices that I make as a teacher. Each one ends with rhetorical questions about how I am addressing these confrontations to better understand my white identity within that role.

A similar form of thinking is also exhibited by the interactions between the unnamed “you” in the photo and the students in “our sacred classroom” in the poem, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*. Within the rising action of the narrative, this poem establishes a connection between three elements: the study of a culturally different *other*, the exploration of that *other* within a classroom of mostly white learners, and my role as a white teacher in that space. Like the introspective thinking about teaching in *First Fall, 2004* and *After the Tsunami*, the central conflict of *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide* hinges on the question of how I understand my role in challenging my students’ thinking. What differs here is removing the students as impediments in that process and instead implicating myself as the one responsible for making the choice to teach about this subject.

The antagonists in this poem are twofold. First, the unnamed subject in “your photo” is the character that is generating the moral conflict for me to understand why I am teaching about the photo in the first place. In the poem, I project thoughts, ideas, and emotions into the picture as, “I think you [the subject of the picture] look tired of survival and exhaustion.” However, this is the way in which I am presenting this photo to the class, in which I am including myself by

using collective pronouns, “our sacred classroom”, “Gathered around us the vestments of learning / warm our shoulders as we treat your image as literature.” By including myself in the classroom, I am no longer separate from the second antagonist, the students that inhabit this space. This relationship to the students is important in this poem’s function in the narrative as it represents a shift to a more critical view of the relationship I have in the classroom with my students. From this poem forward my engagement with teaching becomes more about a focus on the questioning of my teaching practice and less of a direct critique of the students that I teach.

The poem *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz* also has a student as the antagonist, however, narratively, it takes place near the climax and shows one of the most directly confrontational moments of the entire plot. The antagonist is a student of color whom I have invited into my office and I describe as having a “straight back, direct dark stare, and wicked witch defeating manner.” As the protagonist in this scene, just like in *After the Tsunami*, my attempt is to direct the action and control the situation; however, the student turns the space around and with a single direct statement tears down the “Wizardry and artifice” that “masks over vulnerabilities, insecurities, / and realities” that I attempt to hide. Significantly, the interaction with this student is an echo back to the breaking down/fragmenting interaction that is shared in the narrative’s introduction. In *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, a more removed interaction with a person of color causes me to see the world in different and changed way. In *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz* the active conflict with this student completes a shifting of thinking that is directed at my role in teacher education as I am, because of this student’s willingness to call me a racist, able to see “a truth... that I did not know was there.” This poem is also one of the few instances in which a person of color is being identified as a participating character in my white identity (re)development. It is important to note that during the process of

revising this individual poem, I decreased the volume of dialogue from the student so as not to attempt to supplant or imitate their voice and to avoid putting words in their mouth. Therefore, I made the choice that this character should have only one line of direct dialogue and the other descriptions and interpretations of the event described are solely from me.

The last poem that has a specifically addressed antagonist is *Gift of the Ghost*, which precedes the overarching identity related revelations in the conclusion. The epigraph of this poem directs the reader to a specific audience and its antagonist, “*To my students, the next teachers*”. Firmly related to my role as a teacher educator, this poem’s conflict comes back to the concept of what I, intentionally or not, teach my students. In this case, the conflict is not necessarily one of an overall negative tension, rather it is one of recognition of the passive implications of the teacher education space (Titone, 1998). As antagonists in this relationship, the students are the recipients of gifts that are truths about me; however, the conflict resides in their choices to accept or deny those gifts. While the poem does not address each student’s decision to do this, it does present the argument, from my point of view, about the potential impact and legacy that those “gifts” may have on their own roles as teachers. Relating back to the student interactions and rhetorical questions that were brought up in *First Fall, 2004*, *After the Tsunami*, and *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, *Gift of the Ghost* further explores how I view my role as a teacher and how the students participate in that role. As the whole narrative is coming to its close, the interactions between the students and, me, their teacher educator, has become one that is intimately related to an authentic and honest emotional understanding of my white identity within the classroom.

In this section I discussed the narrative elements of setting, theme, and character that help explain the connection between how this autoethnography is structured and the transformative

process of white identity (re)development that it shares. In considering the locations and times in which this narrative takes place the reader can position my (re)development processes evolution from more public to increasing private spaces that has occurred in an alignment with major events. Thematically, the concepts of visibility/invisibility and the natural process of deconstruction present more detailed understandings of the ways in which I approach the influences of whiteness at large on my white identity. And the characters that take part in this narrative move the plot forward through conflict that compels me to reevaluate my white identity within the teacher education space. In the next section, I will look at how the varied emotions I encountered throughout the narrative evolved to reveal a deeper evaluation of my white identity (re)development.

Emotional Evolution/Revelation

The first cycle of coding for emotions with the narrative was completed in the “communicating the rupture” step during the process of creating the narrative (see Chapter 3 and Figure 3.6 in Appendix B). This initial coding looked at the overall scope of the emotions that existed within the early drafts of the poems, and over three separate readings, showed the locations in which the emotions were concentrated (Goleman, 1995; Saldana, 2016). This was a critical step in understanding how each poem developed as a direct reflection of each epiphany. This early analysis was necessary to the refinement process to “shape a new myth” that is the final part of Anzaldúa’s (2012/1987) method to generate a (re)developed identity. This active process of recognizing and encountering the emotions guided both the editing process of each poem and the development of the narrative arc which concentrated and intensified the emotions in the final poetic narrative.

The second cycle of emotions coding differed from the first in two ways. First, given that the poems were in their most refined form, specific attention was paid to the intensities and connections among the emotions rather than simply their presence. Second, given that the poems were now in the fixed narrative order, specific attention was given to the change/evolution of the emotions over the course of the plot. To better see these two elements of the emotions, I utilized NVivo coding software to identify and connect the emotions within the poems and I identified trends in the emotions' development through analytical coding notes/memos (Goleman, 1995; QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020; Saldana, 2016). The same emotions identified in Figure 3.7 in Appendix B were used as codes for this cycle of coding, with the notable addition of the emotion of bravery that was newly discovered during this coding cycle. To more easily share the findings related to the emotions this section will be divided into the five narrative segments of the plot, introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution/conclusion.

Emotions in the Introduction. In the introduction of the narrative, the emotions identified show an overall negative tone and connection with my engagement in understanding the foundations of my white identity. In these early poems, emotional expressions of fear, guilt/shame, cowardice, denial, and loss/grief feature as prominent responses to the events, places, and people shared in the poems. Significantly, the second poem of the narrative, *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*, has strong fear and loss/grief emotional reactions as this poem explores my first visceral "Confrontation with the unknown."

Dominating this poem's emotions is the stark feeling of fear as I am faced with rationalizing an encounter with a person who exemplifies, for me, the racialized *other* in a space and at a time that feels completely unsafe. In the poem's third stanza, the earlier events of the day are exposed as I am reacting to finding "shattered glass / surrounding the passenger side of

our minivan” and consider that this violation of my security has changed “my world” and “shifted [it] off its axis.” The fear that this earlier event elicits compounds how I understand and conceptualize seeing and smelling the poem’s antagonist, “a black man with no home”. My fear of this person, in this place and at this time, has made me vulnerable to recognizing, for the first time, a measure of my own privilege as a white, middle-class person with a home. My reaction to this realization is to “resist and retreat to innocence”, but I cannot, because as I recognize this feeling of fear it has worked at “weakening and frayed” the “sparkling white safety / net” that I have up to this point relied on. The direct result of this fear is the loss/grief that comes because of my changing world view.

The epiphanic event that prompted this poem took place when I was 14 years old and in response to both the break-in of our minivan and seeing/smelling Eddy Street; the protective structures of family and ignorance could not keep me innocent. In the poem, I describe this as feeling like the “lost toddler still unsure of object permanence” and in realizing this change of perspective, I share the very real pain of losing what I thought the world was and grieving for the person I used to be. The loss of a white, middle-class normative world view and the companion grief of no longer being able to remain unaware is manifested through very violent terminology (“abrading”, “cracked, fissured”) that shows the emotional pain and discomfort of this moment. This direct challenge to my previously blissful and blind understanding of the world (the safety and security shared in *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*) emotionally sets in motion the primary motivation of the entire autoethnography.

Heart-tree, the last poem of the introduction, develops further the fear and loss/grief of *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street* as it acknowledges the tacit complicity I fear in being from the Southern United States and the resulting loss of a foundation of my identity in association with

that region. This poem starts with very stark and graphic depictions of the violent history of lynching (“ghosts of strange fruit / hang from the Southern tree”) and slavery (“soiled by souls trampled / heavy by soles worked deep”) in the South and vividly connects these ideas to the “compost rot [that] feeds / the tree on which [my] history clings”. The final lines of this poem question the fear I have in acknowledging that I am a product of this space and its racist systems by asking, “From where does my heart-tree grow?”. This fear comes from acknowledging that I am a recipient, even passively, of some benefit from this oppressive system and then as, I admit that I lose “a clarity to an identity.” This emotional response to fear and the consequential loss of my white identity is also further explored in *Falling the Center Apart* in the climax of the narrative. The fear and loss/grief connection that this poem presents, prompts the recognition and expansion of several other emotions related to how I see my identity beginning to change as it is explored in the rising action.

Emotions in the Rising Action. In the rising action of the narrative, there is a mixture of emotions that show a varied set of interactions and understandings about how my white identity is developing from the fear and loss/grief in the introduction. While the emotions of shame and guilt existed in the introduction, they are directly and intentionally linked in the rising action to the dawning recognition of my role as a white privileged teacher (Matias, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2015). As well in the rising action, there are new instances of anger, both directed at myself and others, that stem from exposing whiteness and white supremacy in the classroom space. Finally, in this segment of the plot, there is a new and surprising emotion of hope that foreshadows the white identity (re)development consideration shared in the narrative’s conclusion (Howard, 2016).

Shame and guilt in the rising action are emotional connections to the revelation of my complicity with white supremacy as a beneficiary of white privilege (Matias, 2016; McIntosh, 1989). Guilt and shame are found almost exclusively together throughout the narrative. In this segment of the plot, these emotions are recognizable in the specific links between my privileges as a white person and my actions and thinking. In the first poem of this portion of the plot, *Intone My White Body*, guilt and shame exist as I question my privilege to choose how I understand my physical body that is connected to my white ancestry,

...What am I to do

with this body? Hands that ache from clinched fists that are
muscle weary and cracked from what ... hard work? In truth,
my hands know no thousand cuts; know no centuries of
weariness or daily combat fatigue. No visible scars of labored history,

false hopes, ancestral loss.

The shame I feel in believing that I can, even remotely, understand what pains, aches, weariness, and ancestral “thousand cuts” of hard work that people of color have endured instigates an even deeper feeling of guilt in this poem.

Later in this narrative section, the poem, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*, places guilt and shame within the classroom as I am teaching about the Rwandan Genocide by using a picture of a survivor in the “nearly all-white hands” of my students. The shame in this poem is both directed at my teaching of this topic and my students’ interactions with it. I feel shame that this lesson appears to be a novelty that is limiting and reductive, almost performative,

as it is taught “one day in a year” and then, seemingly, forgotten. My shame, as a teacher, comes from questioning my role in offering this material to my students. The last stanza asks, “But what am I here: teacher, preacher, reporter, martyr? / Rescuer of the future led astray if they claim they never learned?” I question what my own beliefs and intentions are about presenting this topic to my students. I feel shame in the idea that I am using the picture of a survivor of the genocide not for the sake of teaching their story, but for the performative act of being seen as a ‘good’ white teacher (Helms, 2020; Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015). The guilt that comes from this shame has me label myself and my teaching in this experience as the “heavy-handed preening by *savior* teachers like me.” Also in this poem, I project shame on my students and myself as we try to seek some “absolution for guilt” we feel in recognizing the horror of the genocide. I question this projection of shame as it is not entirely clear what my expectations are for the students in this circumstance; however, I implicate all of us in the classroom for attempting to explain away and dismiss the tragic realities of this event. The resultant guilt of this shame is self-directed as I question my role in bringing this topic to my classroom in the first place.

The rising action has the largest overall concentration of the reactive emotion of anger within the plot (Salovey, et al, 2008). Anger in these poems is divided between anger directed at myself and anger displayed outwardly toward others. Interestingly, the anger directed at others is isolated in this section to a specific interaction with a white student in which my frustration with their lack of empathy evokes my angry response. In the poem, *After the Tsunami*, my frustration with the student’s use of “Adolescent bravado that excuses so much” is manifested as anger as I condemn the student’s use of humor that is “comically and grotesquely huge” to deflect the uncomfortable feelings of tragedy. My outward anger is rare in the narrative and in connection with understanding my identity as a white teacher educator it is important to expose that this

anger comes from how I project a feeling onto this student. My anger is a result of my own frustration because this student is not perceiving the tragedy of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in the same way I am. While the student knows enough to understand that the geographic area that was devastated has a large population (the comment from the student was, “that place is overcrowded anyway.”) his response is humor and deflection. His response does not fit with what I perceive it should be and my outward anger is an emotional reaction to that internal dissonance (Salovey, et al., 2008).

Anger directed at the self is much more prominent in this section as it results from my reactions to shame, guilt, and frustration in recognizing white privilege. In the poem, *Intone My White Body*, the first instance of self-directed anger comes as a response to my emotionally forward and hyper-sensitive reaction to recognizing whiteness and the systemic privilege it has afforded me. The anger is a response to the frustration of being so susceptible to the “vision of purity labeled throughout time. / A story taken for truth and rancid with liars and lies”. This anger is associated with the physical pain of sunburn that is described as “bringing whiteness / to color and exposing nerve endings // to the slightest of disturbances.” My anger at being lulled into the false narrative of whiteness further is complicated by the resulting emotions of guilt/shame that come with it. The cycle then becomes clear, that new recognition and anger with seeing the privileges manifests more feelings of guilt/shame which in turn reignite more anger (Matias, 2016). In this poem, this cycle is articulated in the final lines, “Faceless and skinless we are the same. / But our faces and skin make a difference.” The anger directed at the self in this paradoxical recognition is reductive to making sense of my relationship to whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy (Howard, 2016; Matias, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2015; Matias, et al., 2017).

The poem, *First Fall, 2004*, offers another perspective on anger that comes from shame/guilt but is not oriented in a self-reducing way. As another poem that takes place in the classroom, this poem is populated by questions about my interaction as a teacher to understand my students' relationship to hating the racialized *other*. The anger directed at myself in this poem is turned toward compelling me to take a step back and "see / more about myself than about them [my students]". While the anger in *After the Tsunami* was directed toward a specific student the self-directed anger in *First Fall, 2004* is responding to my frustration around determining how I can be a teacher who challenges the ideas of hate and bigotry. The anger coming from that frustration is turned toward an authentic self-appraisal in which "I see / more about myself than about them" and use that anger as fuel to ask the difficult question about being a braver teacher that is willing to move past shame and guilt and discomfort to challenge racism (hooks, 1994; Matias, 2016).

One surprising finding of the analysis of this section of the plot was the entrance of the emotion of hope. This emotion is first presented with the critique of the link between how I understand my white body in relationship to my beneficiary status as a white person. In the last stanzas of the poem, *Intone My White Body*, I ask the rhetorical questions, "What hope is there in the recognition of skin-deep difference? // What do I see when I peel back the skin and find myself faceless?" Both of these questions are forward-facing and foreshadow the hopeful elements of seeing within and past superficial and performative surface level actions and toward a deeper and more intrinsic shift in understanding who I am as a white teacher educator (Howard, 2016).

Hope is also present in the poem, *White Standing Stones*, in the form of the clearer and more intentional path to see past the blinding invisibility of whiteness' seemingly "white

immobile rocks”. In this poem, hope is the self-assured agency that there is a way that I can actively “arrest the repetitive spin exposing / the gaps in the white standing stones” and utilize that tool to break down the seemingly “immobile rocks” of white supremacy (Howard, 2016). While both instances of hope show up as rather fleeting and small, they each suggest that there is a possible outcome to the narrative that contributes to an understanding of white identity (re)development that can be positive. Within the falling action and conclusion of the plot, hope increases in intensity as I uncover more positive aspects of the process of knowing more intimately and more constructively my white identity.

Emotions in the Climax. The climax of any narrative is a turning point or a place at which the conflict comes to a head and a change takes place (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Such is the case with the emotions within my poetic narrative autoethnography. Within the poems in this section, the emotional conflict exists among the profound feeling of loss and grief with the discomfort of challenging my white identity, a deeper feeling of fear relative to guilt and shame, and, most notably, a developed sense of cowardice that comes from the combination of fear, loss/grief, and guilt and shame connected to my responsibility as a teacher educator. The climax of this narrative shows an active recognition of the complex mix of emotions that have shifted, challenged, and allowed for the more fully nuanced understanding of my white identity as a teacher educator to develop.

The first poem in the climax deals exclusively with the loss/grief related to one of the central tenets of critical whiteness studies, Warren’s (1999) concept that “whiteness studies demands a critical examination of the center in the hope that the center will fall apart” (p. 197) *Falling the Center Apart* considers the emotional discomfort of loss that a white person who engages in this work faces. The poem considers my connection to the invisible force of gravity

that “pulls me to the center of earth” by a force and an interaction that I do not question until I see something that defies it. Metaphorically, this gravitational force is the invisible hegemonic powers of whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy, that exists without being noticed (Amico, 2015; hooks, 2014; Gillborn, 2005; Thompson, 2003; Solomona et al., 2005). Only when a white person intentionally seeks to challenge these ideas within themselves, do they begin to as Warren (1999) advocates “hope that the center falls apart” (p. 197). The poem’s turning point is on the question, “Does the vision of myself go the same way? / Bounded like a firefly in a jar in summer.” The act of capturing and understanding the “firefly”, a symbolic escape from the gravitational pull of whiteness, is an effort to move toward a better understanding of my own white identity. By capturing this idea, I allow it to be something that I can hold on to, study, and better understand. However, I also understand the painful possibility that exists in trapping and examining “the firefly”, as I see the real danger in experiencing the loss and connected grief that comes by cutting myself off from the “center that holds us invisibly spellbound to it”. There is a potentially pain-filled process in which “the fireflies are all dead” as I must capture my whiteness to better know it. I lament that by losing a center around which to be drawn, losing a connection to being white as I have known it, there is a risk of experiencing knowing myself through “the furtive performance of / the doomed and the damned”. The poem ends on the sorrowful note that with this loss there is “nowhere else to go but away”; a sentiment of pain and disillusionment in not knowing where to center myself as I (re)develop my white identity.

The poems, *Teacher Coward* and *Three, I Must Stand Up* both contain further developments of the connected emotions of fear and guilt/shame. In *Teacher Coward*, fear comes from the question about how I choose to challenge racism in my classroom. In the poem,

my fear is about the exercise of my power over the educational space as I am making the decision about, “Who do I condemn today and who do I support?” In this choice, I am conflicted about how I exercise my privileged voice as I “weigh / my power on blind justice’s false set of scales”. The fear that exists in this choice comes from a perceived existential threat about the repercussions of taking a stand in the classroom and the fragility of my “humanistic credo on my / crisply laundered white shirt sleeve” (Howard, 2016). Shame/guilt come into this situation as I question my actions as a teacher who hides “behind my invisible privilege” as I feel forced to make this choice guided by the fear of being excluded from the protection of whiteness. The final lines of this poem confront all these ideas as I express a deep sense of self-directed anger about my frustration. While I espouse that “all I want / to do is be better, braver, and bolder”, I also admit that the existential “fear holds me back” from actively taking a stand that would separate me from the emotional protection that whiteness and my white privilege gives me.

The poem *Three, I Must Stand Up* continues with the concept of my choices and the connected emotions regarding how I respond to the deaths of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, and Ahmaud Aubrey. My shame and guilt about my inaction to respond to these atrocities is reflected in this poem through images of passivity, quietness, and idleness as I am listening to “distant chants on the main street / three blocks away; cries for breath. Screams of “hands up //don't shoot” and justice and goodness and rightness.” My fear, in this poem, is used as an excuse that I blame on “my lizard brain, some cultural / mutation imbedded into my tribalized DNA.” What makes this poem’s combination of these emotions distinct from the fear and shame and guilt in *Teacher Coward* is how they are confronted. In *Teacher Coward*, the fear and shame and guilt are linked to an existential threat of isolation from the protection of whiteness. In *Three, I Must Stand Up* this combination of emotions is an introspective set of tools to divide and better

understand how my identity has developed and how the varied elements of that identity contribute to changing my decisions as white person.

The “three faces” in *Three, I Must Stand Up* that “look out over echoing streets” are the conflicting aspects of my identity that I, at this point in the narrative, am acknowledging as impactful in breaking down my white identity. “The teacher” face is the connection I see to those choices about my role in addressing race/racism and whiteness and reflects back to the emotions of shame/guilt and fear explored in the rising action and climax. “The parent” face looks out from “my Tennessee front porch” protective of both “the children” and myself as I fear how to address ideas of violence and white supremacy that are “difficult / to explain” and will break the veil of “ignorance” that “must be bliss”. The third face of the “coward” is another evolution of the fear that is largely based on the potential danger of recognizing how I see myself as a white person and the inevitable loss of something central to that identity that comes with that realization.

While each of these faces of my identity are exposed for examination, what makes *Three, I Must Stand Up*’s emotional development significant as a part of the climax of the narrative is the revelations that take place in the final two stanzas. Up to this point in the entire narrative, there has been an emphasis on the acknowledgment and exposure of the emotions that have contributed to the white person/white teacher that is, “quietly...sitting on my porch”. In these last two stanzas, however, the emotional beat of this narrative comes to its crescendo as I hear “hearts beating out rhythms of truth, / three beats, then three more, the endless, beating staccato. // Sitting passive and quiet is a betrayal.” In this pivotal moment, the emotions of shame/guilt, fear, and cowardice, that I have previously used as excuses to remain passive, are directly confronted. Through “Aggressive and critical” attention to these excuses and emotional detours,

I turn to the hope and bravery-filled articulation of directed action that is explored in the falling action of the plot. This forceful and emphatic movement is captured by the bold statement at the end of the climax, “I must stand up.”

Emotions in the Falling Action. Hope, pride, and bravery all result from the imperative statement at the end of the climax. These emotions are developed more intimately and into action-oriented reactions as the poems in this section work to clarify the emotional shifts toward a more positive outlook on my white identity. The first poem in the falling action, *I Can Breathe... Why that Matters, April 20, 2021*, functions in a similar fashion to *After the Tsunami*, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*, and *Three, I Must Stand Up*, in that I work to understand and react to a race-related event that has in some way shaped my identity. However, what makes this reaction distinct is how I address the emotions of shame and guilt. In the case of *I Can Breathe... Why that Matters, April 20, 2021*, I am responding to the verdict of the murder of George Floyd and my initial reaction is laced with guilt and shame relative to my initial feelings of complicity, in some way. Overtly in this poem, I name my emotional response, “For that breath, I feel guilt and shame. / Because I enjoy the oxygen expanding / the wet alveoli of my lungs”. What makes the emotions in this poem different from the earlier poems is the detailed and specific movement away from being consumed by shame/guilt and shifting to the hopeful promise of meaningful change.

Using very specific references to interconnected and universal body systems, *I Can Breathe... Why that Matters, April 20, 2021*, echoes back to the earlier thinking of *Intone My White Body* and the act of looking deeper into personal motivations and considerations in reacting to racial difference. As a reaction to the conflict in the climax, however, *I Can Breathe... Why that Matters, April 20, 2021*, moves this thinking beyond passive introspection

and into an altogether new territory of “action and activation”. At this place in my emotional evolution, I step back from the initial feelings of guilt/shame and engage more specifically with the smaller functions of change. The “oxygen” that is followed through the “system we all partake in” carries the emotion of hope that “penetrates deeply and changes DNA.” In feeling this coursing change permeate through my identity, I come confidently to the realization that “I can breathe, and that matters / as long as I use it for more than myself.” While this final statement could come with a certain amount of performative allyship it is further clarified in my shifted identity development by the next two poems that address this very idea (Love, 2019; Patton & Bondi, 2015).

In *Gift of the Ghost*, using the theme of visibility/invisibility (discussed earlier), I work to understand and emotionally decode how my newly developed identity is made visible to the teacher education students I teach, as well as how, invisibly, that identity also influences their future classrooms. Within the first lines of this poem the honest acknowledgement of my complicity in influencing my teacher education students exists. But in this case, I engage in this recognition without being consumed and stymied by guilt/shame. As I see each of these ghosts, “hanging quietly and casually / at your [my students] shoulders” there are no rhetorical questions or reductive considerations to excuse these feelings or attempt to dismiss these realities. Rather, the ghosts’ existences are engaged with, not denied. Each ghost’s gift, whether good or bad, is acknowledged and witnessed as a functional part of the whole that “reflects honestly who I am”. This act of bravery, without shame, in naming these connections between whiteness and my role as a teacher educator exists in contrast to the shame and guilt-ridden teacher that is presented earlier in the narrative. Each “gift” the ghosts present are the means by which I share with my

students the flawed, imperfect, and evolving parts of the person that I am becoming as I continue to (re)develop my white identity.

The temptation to label oneself as either being a ‘good’ white person or a ‘bad’ white person and how that labeling creates conflict in numerous ways will be discussed in more detail in the discussion session later; however, in the poetic narrative I work to wrestle with these ideas in the last poem of the falling action, *Clark Kent is the Real Hero*. This poem problematizes my fears about the publicly visible side of a (re)developed white identity that is associated with the superhuman, savior hero archetype. Reminiscent of the rhetorical devices in, *First Fall, 2004*, *After the Tsunami*, *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide* and *Teacher Coward*, this poem addresses the fear I have of seeking the ostentatious and out-sized displays of antiracism through inauthentic and performative actions. *Clark Kent is the Real Hero* works to address this fear, by shifting my interpretations of my antiracist actions from the larger-than-life Superman saving the day behavior to the “Mild mannered and quiet” ways of the “bespeckled, bland suited, simplified, flawed” Clark Kent. Finding pride and confidence in “writing a truth / ... and / giving words to shape the narrative of / the subtle and sincere world, that is” lets me acknowledge that I am flawed and part of a flawed white supremacist system without being confined by guilt/shame or fear.

The first stanza of this poem shares the image of “Superman’s / covert costume changes ... / realized in reverse” that represents the stripping away of the outward false layers that are “protective / symbols” and shows that the most important aspect of my new identity is a prideful confidence “in the self-assured knowledge / that is clear eyed, forward looking, and patiently aware / that there is no link between perfection and being good.” Releasing myself from the burden of perfection in understanding my white identity is a pointed moment of adopting the

brave and pride-swelling idea that I can be part of the “constant cycle of revision and / retelling, decentered, and without capes and boots” that is necessary to be an actively antiracist white teacher educator (Howard, 2016). This emotional realization that there can be pride and bravery in an imperfect, flawed, white identity that is positively positioned to challenge racism is further developed in the conclusion of the narrative.

Emotions in the Conclusion. In the conclusion of the plot, the foreshadowed hope and joyful pride that have developed from the honest connection with my white identity are directly linked to the lasting understanding that there is no end to the process of knowing my white identity. Hope, that was foreshadowed in the rising action of the narrative, exists in these poems as part of recognizing my own power in the intentional and directed challenge to white supremacy. And, finding joy and pride in understanding that my white identity is not fixed but a work in progress toward being a better person who is white, is a freeing feeling that extends this narrative beyond its final words.

As an extension of the theme of the natural process of destruction the poem, *Power Erodes Like Granite*, invites the emotion of hope that comes with empowerment to make change. Each stanza begins with a direct assertion of “Let me” that is encouraging my willful participation in the act breaking down the power of white supremacy. Within this overall hopeful tone is a considered and slow restraint that is indicative of a reflective intention. While the theme of the natural process of destruction is consistent throughout the narrative (as noted earlier), this poem’s link of that theme to the emotion of hope is not hasty or impulsive. Rather, the hope in this poem comes as a result of the slow and intentional processes of erosion. Described as a “slow agent of destructive purpose” I am, in this poem, aware that the hope of “break[ing] down the white walled / mountain sides” is one that takes time and has the goal of generating, “deeper

rupturing to grow to greater depths.” The hope expressed in this poem is an extended and patient emotion that shows that I am aware that there is no quick resolution to dismantling white supremacy and that “Like granite, power erodes slowly.”

The slow and intentional progression also shows how this poem differs from the earlier narrative’s emotional portrayal of my white identity. There are no fearful or self-defeating comments, no emotions of guilt/shame at some existential threat, and no feeling of self-directed anger. This poem is honest in acknowledging the difficulty that surrounds challenging the power of whiteness, but it does not fall into the emotional trappings of the poems earlier in the narrative. *Power Erodes Like Granite* shows an emotional understanding of my white identity that is actively forward looking and concerned with my active participation in the process of seeing myself and my white identity more honestly.

The final poem of the narrative, *The Beauty of Asymmetry*, develops the hopeful pride of *Power Erodes Like Granite* by sharing these emotions as directly connected to how I am both physically and emotionally seeing myself. *The Beauty of Asymmetry* shows the outcome of my emotional growth beyond the blissful ignorance and self-defeating concepts that were guided by fear, shame/guilt, and anger present in the narrative’s earlier poems. This poem shows a knowing and confident response to, “Seeing / change where there was once the perception / of uniformity and silence; blissful ignorance” that recognizes that there is space in my newly developed white identity for complexity and nuance. As the poetic narrative concludes with this poem, there exists the real understanding that the larger process of my white identity (re)development is not, nor ever will be, finished. This unfinished process is described as, “A happy exhaustion of noticing and acknowledging / that not all things need to be aligned to be better than / yesterday.” In the end, the hope that I continue to engage in and be reflective on this process is linked to the

acceptance that I will continue to change and never be “a uniform shade of myself from yesterday.” This more complex version of my white identity exists in contrast to the emotionally fearful, reactive, and myopic version that was presented at the narrative’s beginning.

The emotions in this narrative evolve from overwhelmingly negative feelings of fear, shame/guilt, and loss/grief into more positive and growth-oriented feelings of pride, bravery, and revelations of hope about my identity as a white teacher educator. In each of the poems, the emotional engagement with each unique setting, character, and experience shows a complex mix of internalized understanding about the epiphanies that I have explored as part of this process to better know myself. Next, I will look at the narrative arc from the perspectives of two white identity development models and elaborating on each element of these models I will explore how this narrative shows a progression in the development of my white identity as a teacher educator.

Progression of Identity Development

The autoethnography, shared in Chapter 4, is a developed narrative that displays a uniquely personal experience in showing and seeing how I have evolved as a result of the selected epiphanic moments related to whiteness and my role as a white teacher/teacher educator. In this section, I will share how my white identity is recognizable across the autoethnographic narrative and show how that recognition informs a better understanding of the white teacher educator I am. To strategize this exploration, I used a second cycle of coding to elaborate on the thinking, actions, and feelings that are connected to Helms (2020) white identity development schemas and Howards (1999) white identity orientations (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Saldana, 2016). Using NVivo software as a tool, I coded the six schemas and three orientations, each divided by their subcodes, of these two white identity theories that are defined and linked in Chapter 2 and shared in Figure 2.1 in Appendix A. (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020).

The coding process for this set of findings was different than the coding for narrative design or emotions that have already been explored. The coding of the white identity models looked to take the premises of Helms (2020) and Howard's (2016) models and identify points in the narration that were indicative of specific ways in which I was thinking, acting, or feeling as a result of or in response to situations shared and expressed in the poems. The coding discussed in this section of the findings chapter serve as notations of the intentions and implications of the narrative poems rather than as sole reflections of the static language of Helms and Howard's models (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Saldana, 2016).

Helms' White Identity Schemas. Helms' (2020) white identity development schemas correlate to the changes in my perspective and my understanding of my white identity as it relates to whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy. This evolution shows a general progression from a state of ignorance about whiteness to one of more intentional and honest awareness about the varied contributions to my white identity. The earliest poems consistently share examples of the contact and disintegration schemas as they show my first interactions and acknowledgements of being racialized (Helms, 2020). In the poem, *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*, the recognition that the town in which I grew up valued and praised the qualities of "the perpetual / look of sameness every day" represents the contact schema in this earliest thinking. Likewise, in *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street* through my very limited interaction with the "black man with no home," I find a revelation that my world, the white protected space that I found comfort and protection in, is "cracked, fissured" and "weakening and frayed." These earliest poems present examples of the contact schema of Helms' model and establishes a starting position for my identity development from which the plot evolves to show how my identity changes.

In the rising action of the narrative, a transition takes place that moves from the elements of the contact and disintegration schemas and into the pseudo independence and immersion-emersion schemas. This transition begins in the poem *Intone my White Body* as the interpretation of my whiteness in this poem places the physical element of my identity in contrast to people of color. In direct reference to my physical self and my ancestral white history, *Intone my White Body* explores the disintegration schema's exposition about my shame and guilt at being seen as part of whiteness that is "seen in / mirrors on the normalized pages of glossy magazine / windows to wealth; a vision of purity labeled throughout time." As a point of transition however, the white privilege system is described as being a "truth and rancid with liars and lies" echoing the pseudo-independent schema's intellectual interest in diagnosing that there are those white people who are 'bad' for perpetuating the lies of white superiority (Helms, 2020). This poem also transitions my thinking about resolving my own understanding of whiteness as a burden to those "that I oppress" by asking them to tell me the solution to be less racist; asking for clarification about what they "see on me?". This question shows a shift toward, both a willingness to ask about what my white identity means and the desire to find a better way to be white, both principles of the disintegration schema (Helms, 2020). But what follows this question moves my identity development toward a new schema altogether. The last stanza of *Intone my White Body* offers the narrative's first move into the immersion-emersion schema. "What do I see when I peel back the skin and find myself faceless? / Those fleeting moments of vulnerability and humility. / Faceless and skinless we are the same. / But our faces and skin make a difference." This revelation is the first place in the narrative in which I acknowledge the honest and vulnerable reality that I am aware of a deeper and more intentional "personal responsibility

for racism” and actively see myself as being part of the perpetuation of white supremacy (Helms, 2020, p. 63).

The rising action of the plot continues to explore the shifting schemas through the poems *First Fall, 2004*, *After the Tsunami*, and *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide* that put the movement of my identity into the classroom and among my interactions with students. All three of these poems end with rhetorical devices that show ways in which I question and trouble my responsibility as a white teacher to challenge myself and my students to better engage in understanding ourselves in relationship to others. In all these instances, the rhetorical devices show a blend of thinking between pseudo-independence and the immersion-emersion schemas. Each poem ends with some form of a revelation that I want to engage in an intellectual conversation about racism and that I feel a responsibility to teach in this way. I also end these poems by separating myself from my students and those that are not aware the hegemonic influence of whiteness as I openly acknowledge that I am part of a group of “heavy-handed preening ... savior teachers” (from *The 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide*). However, in this consistency and the return to these questions I, at least in some way, show an active and intentional pursuit of becoming more honest with myself about who I am as a white person and a white teacher. I noted in my analytic memos while coding these instances that I was seeking to in some way, “be White in a way that ‘feels’ right and moral” (Helms, 2020, p. 62). This desire is a hallmark of the immersion/emersion schema and shows that as the action of the narrative rises toward the climax that my understanding of my white identity continues to evolve from the contact and disintegration schemas of the introduction.

The poems around the climax of the narrative’s action present more clarified identification of the immersion/emersion schema. *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*,

Teacher Coward, and *Three, I Must Stand Up* concentrate and name more of the painful to admit and “brutally honest with oneself” ideas that are consistent with the immersion/emersion schema (Helms, 2020, p. 63). In this crucial section of the narrative journey, I experience the admission of my own arrogance as a teacher (*A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*), the cowardice at taking a stand regarding my own antiracist beliefs (*Teacher Coward*), and a multifaced realization about the shame of inaction that I have allowed myself to become victim to (*Three, I Must Stand Up*). At this point in the plot seeing through and then past these acknowledgements gives me the narrative space to do more than say them out loud. I can, with these declarations, actively confront them to better know them and move more toward the autonomous schema (Helms, 2020). A distinct example of this evolution of the immersion/emersion toward the autonomous concept is in the poem, *Three, I Must Stand Up* that comes before the falling action begins.

Early in the poem, there is a distinct reflection back to the disintegration schema as I am flashing back to some earlier ideas of the influences of fear of the *other* and my intentional denial of racism’s existence that were brought up in the earlier poems of the narrative. By reminding the reader about these prior points of my identity development process, *Three, I Must Stand Up* makes more space for a turn toward a new way of considering my white identity. The recognition that I can discern “three faces [that] look out over the echoing streets” shows an intentional act of being more realistically critical of how these three aspects of my white identity are influencing the choices I make about understanding my complicity in a racist society without falling into the traps of fear or shame and guilt (Helms, 2020; Matias, 2016). With the line, “Quietly, I am sitting on my porch. Listening. Hearing. Feeling, for the first time, / the chest deep pound of drums, hearts beating out rhythms of truth,” I am making a calm assertive

statement about the point of clarity and revelation that this quiet moment has given me. After this disclosure comes what I think is among the most authentic statements of the entire narrative,

Sitting passive and quiet is a betrayal. The best I can be is better than I was.

To each face of me I turn, defiant and intentional. Aggressive and critical.

Three visions that I allow to limit and define me. I must stand up. (*Three, I Must Stand Up*)

This stanza is an assertion of active resistance to the modes of thinking about whiteness that have been established up to this moment in the plot. Helms (2020) notes that realizations of this type often “catch their hosts by surprise” within the immersion/emersion schema (p. 63). Certainly, as I was crafting this poem and developing it during the “shaping a new myth” step of the methodology, the emotional and practical implications of the statement, “I must stand up” were surprising for their intensity and connection to the rest of the narrative.

The falling action that leads to the conclusion of the plot blends more experience and reflection about the newly recognized consideration of my white identity within the immersion/emersion schema. Notably, in this portion of the plot this schema is brought directly into the classroom in *Gift of the Ghost*. In the last section of this poem, I expose the legacy that my own whiteness has on the teachers I am teaching and with that acknowledgment promote that there are both things that I can teach them about whiteness within education (“bridges of faith / that I trust you are willing to cross.”) and those concepts that I do not wish to pass on (“my white sheet, without eye holes to let you see clearly.”). This poem brings the reader into the developmental space in which I am both accepting that I am part of the system of white supremacy and a beneficiary of white privilege in the classroom while also exploring what I am doing to dismantle that system (Helms, 2020). The last line of this poem presents that intention

well and sets the stage for the narrative's conclusion, "ghosts that you [the next teachers] leave mustn't be the same as mine."

The final two poems of the narrative, *Power Erodes Like Granite* and *The Beauty of Asymmetry* complete the plot by bringing in not totally actualized and complete examples of Helms' last schema, autonomy, but exemplify points along a path toward this way of operationalizing my whiteness as a teacher educator. Helms' sums up the autonomous identity schema as the white person who commits "to being White," understands what it means to be nonracist and white, and is continuously and actively part of moving further and further toward that ideal (Helms, 2020, p. 73). Both poems that conclude the plot of the autoethnography, fit into this movement and process. In *Power Erodes Like Granite*, I am making distinct and purposeful assertions about my developed intentions. Each stanza begins with "Let me", which serves as a declaration of intent to the white supremacist power structure that conditions my actions. Throughout the poem my movement is to slowly yet actively, break and erode the power of white supremacy by being, "erosion's / slow agent of destructive purpose." This insider agent status works as part of Helms' autonomous schema as I am seeing my place within the oppressive system and understanding how I am a part of the damage that system perpetuates, but not in a reductive way. Rather than being conditioned by the guilt and shame of my place, the autonomous understanding shown in *Power Erodes Like Granite* sees that oppression has larger impacts on everyone (including me) and that part of my role within that system is to understand and challenge it in order to erode it (Helms, 2020).

The last poem of the narrative, *The Beauty of Asymmetry*, explores the elements of the imperfect and process-oriented nature that Helms' autonomous schema exemplifies. The autonomous schema's focus is on "a lifelong process of discovery and recommitment to defining

oneself in positive terms as a White person” (Helms, 2020, p. 73). This poem takes place in the most intimate of settings in the narrative and at an emotionally vulnerable time (“the day after my 40th birthday”). Placed in this setting, I force myself to look and assess who I am at this specific point in time and after the epiphanic revelations of the plot. The poem begins with a look at the physical imperfections in my aging face noting some areas of regret and negative critique. Then the poem’s focus turns inward on the line, “I am not a uniform shade of myself from yesterday” as the process of critique moves into recognizing that in the path of understanding who I am as a white person perfection is not the measure by which I am using to assess this process. Rather, what is most important is “Seeing / change where there was once a perception / of uniformity and silence; blissful ignorance.” The poem refers to where the entire narrative began in the first poem, *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*, and shows that at this point my understanding of who I am as a white person is an active, intentional, and critical process that truly never ends. *The Beauty of Asymmetry*, and the narrative as a whole, ends on a central concept of Helms’ autonomous schema, “A happy exhaustion of noticing and acknowledging / that not all things need to be aligned to be better than / yesterday.” The journey of developing and understanding myself as white teacher educator is never complete, never perfect, and will always require attention in order to continue to evolve and grow (Helms, 2020).

Howard’s White Identity Orientations. Howard’s (2016) white identity orientations (described and defined in Chapter 2) are organized in three categories each with three descriptive modalities (thinking, feeling, acting). Throughout the autoethnographic narrative in Chapter 4 all three orientations and their related modalities were identified across the plot. The narrative progressed from more instances of the fundamentalist orientation in the introductory poems into

a larger concentration of the integrationist orientation in the rising action, climax, and falling action, and finished with the resolution primarily in the transformationist's orientation.

The highest concentration of fundamentalist orientation can be found in the narrative's introductory poems. For example, in the poem *Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss* the fundamentalist feeling modality can be witnessed as my understanding "of the *other* is / abstract as all things fit into the context / of Thompson's drug store and Workman's outlet." Central to the fundamentalist's feeling is that when confronted by something/someone that challenges the accepted/defined truth of white superiority their reaction is to retreat to the known and comfortable (Howard, 2016). Within this poem, that retreat is exemplified by those physical locations (e.g. "the Bland River", "Thompson's drug store", and "Workman's outlet") that I associate with safety and the known waypoints of my growing up. Further in this poem, the fundamentalist ideal of "the single-dimensional understanding of truth" (Howard, 2016, p. 106) is shared as my perception of who controls and wields power "is explained / by coded degree; some things are bad... / to be something different was worse." The recognition I have is that understanding control is about maintaining white normalcy and that the way in which I am able to best operate in this space is by accepting and unquestioningly fitting into the "cloak of homogeneity" that is whiteness, "sitting at arm's reach" within spaces that I know (Howard, 2016).

Fundamentalist acting within the introduction of the narrative is further shown by my visceral response to seeing/acknowledging "a black man with no home" for the first time, in the poem, *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*. In this poem's exploration, my actions of avoidance, disgust, and out-right lack of empathy toward the "black man with no home" show not necessarily an intentionally vicious or violent white supremacist act of aggression, but an

assertively self-protective response. The tone of this poem in evoking smell (e.g. “smell of piss in public”, “stains like oil that stink like shit”) as well as internalized feeling of discomfort, angst, denial, and threat (e.g. “Squeeze your eyes shut. / Hold your nose tight. / It does not exist. / It *will* all go away”) all convey a fundamentalist reaction to difference through discomfort (Howard, 2016).

In several other sections of the narrative, other examples of the fundamentalist orientation also exist as examples of prior positions that have been shifted by specific events/ideas. In the poem, *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*, there is a clear understanding of separation between the student of color and myself in the poem. I make clear in the first line, that I have invited the student to, “My office [that] is my Emerald city, palace of power”. I have clearly separated the student as the one to be dominated in this space and the one that I have granted permission to enter. I further exemplify this fundamentalist domination by wielding my words and body language as weapons with intended negative purpose, bringing, “my inner teacher up into my shoulders and cast with great fanfare / my bright white shadow over you expecting you to be defensive, and quail / affronted, incredulous, dumbfounded, the passive Dorothy.” Within the setting of the poem, my understanding of who I am as a white teacher is as the true authority in this space and at this time.

What is distinct about *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*’s use of the fundamentalist orientation and character is that it is presented as a representation of the white teacher who is then challenged to reassess that power by the student of color antagonist. The fundamentalist frame and thinking are challenged by the student actively calling out my racist behavior as their teacher. What shifts, is the tone and understanding about the performative nature of the fundamentalist character as I call it, “Wizardry and artifice are masks over

vulnerabilities, insecurities, / and realities that I have no desire to see.” In this poem my progression is from the fundamentalist orientation into the integrationist perspective is shown and suggests that I am willing to acknowledge, question, and address my white identity more directly.

The dominant orientation within the rising action and climax of the narrative is the integrationist orientation. Several instances of integrationist feeling relative to my active role in the classroom are noteworthy as they speak to more critique of my pedagogical considerations that will be discussed later in this chapter. In the poems, *After the Tsunami* and *The 20th Anniversary of The Rwandan Genocide* there are direct examples of my actions as a teacher working to expose my majority white students to the racialized *other*. By teaching about the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, I am portraying much of the integrationist ideal of engaging in a conversation about difference without asking either myself or my students to directly confront white supremacy (Howard, 1999). Much of the action and behavior described by these teaching situations places the questioning and critique of these events in protective Eurocentric terms as, “I try to bring it back here; closer to home with terms, numbers, places / that you know, you relate too” (from *After the Tsunami*) and “Gathered around us the vestments of learning / warm our shoulders as we treat your image as literature” (from *The 20th Anniversary of The Rwandan Genocide*).

Through this form of keeping the *other* at a distance, I maintain a level of comfort for both myself and the students that does not actively challenge white dominant narratives. Through teaching these events I can claim that I am the altruistic ‘good’ white liberal teacher who is teaching about other cultures, but I proceed in this instruction without actively challenging the white supremacy laced circumstances that would cause discomfort to my white students

(Howard, 2016). I enact the “good White liberal mentality” and protect the emotional comfort of both parties without actually changing/challenging either one (Howard, 2016, p. 111).

The integrationist orientation is connected to the emotional reactions of guilt and shame in relationship to the recognition of a white person’s direct connection to racism (Howard, 2016; Matias, 2016). In the climax of the narrative, the poem, *Teacher Coward*, presents the conflict that I feel as a teacher to be emotionally connected to my role to challenge and condemn varied forms of white supremacy. In the context of teaching, my emotional reaction to race-related violence is described as, “tears / as a parent, teacher, man, genuinely / build behind my invisible privilege”. While I acknowledge that I am operating under a privileged system, I am still employing the emotionally fragile tactics of shame and guilt that pushes questioning of the larger systematic issues of race further away (DiAngelo, 2011). Placing an emotional condition on whiteness and recentering the circumstance around my own guilt and shame lets me still talk about the issue of race-related violence but lets me protect myself from it by performatively showing outward emotions that deflect deeper discussion (Matias, 2016; Matias, et al. 2017). The cowardice that exists in this poem is an emotional response to fear that I am claiming and prevents me from being, “better, braver, and bolder” to actively challenge racism. As an example of the integrationist orientation these moments show my willing attempt to acknowledge that systematic racism exists while actively protecting myself and my students from discomfort (Howard, 2016).

Howard’s third element of white identity development is the transformationist orientation. Evidence of this understanding of my white identity is primarily in the conclusion of the narrative as I am engaging in a more proactive understanding of what being white means to me as a white teacher educator. In the poem, *Clark Kent is the Real Hero*, I work to understand

how to discard the performative superficial “protective symbols and spit curl” and see the act of acknowledging myself as white as “better / realized in reverse”. This example of the transformationist mode shows an active distancing of “themselves from notions of White goodness and moral purity” and acknowledging the flawed position without the trappings of guilt and shame (Howard, 2016, p. 113). In *Clark Kent is the Real Hero* the vision of what makes for a true story for myself is one that, “must be truer than / it was yesterday” crafted in a “constant cycle of revision and retelling”. This transformationist thinking process shows the willing and intentional exploration of my own racial identity that is not viewed in terms of absolute truths, but is considered a dynamic and continuous exploration (Howard, 2016).

One element of the transformationist orientation that is distinctly lacking from the entire narrative is the humble interaction with people who are not white. Howard (2016) states that a key distinction of this orientation is “actively seek[ing] cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions because they realize their [the transformationalist white person] own growth is dependent on such connections” (p. 114). Across the narrative and most notably within the emotionally hopeful resolution, there are two distinct interactions with people of color that are in conflict or distantly oppressive. As noted in the narrative design section above, characters of color in the narrative are either viewed with fear (e.g. *On the 10th Block of Eddy Street*) or are portrayed in combative opposition (e.g. *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz*). No characters of color exist in the narrative that I give equal voice to or from which I actively seek learning and growth. The only person of color given direct voice in this narrative is the direct antagonist student in *A Note of Thanks from the Wizard of Oz* whose only line of dialogue directly calls me out for being racist. In another unique instance regarding the voice of people of color, in the poem, *Intone My White Body*, I seek guidance from “you that I oppress” by asking about their

view of my white body. Following this request, I claim, “Faceless and skinless we are the same. / But our faces and skin make a difference” acknowledging that difference exists but stopping short of giving voice to others as part of my story.

A final element of note in Howard’s (2016) orientations is the motivation of the transformationist white educator that is directed “by a vision of healing and social justice” (p. 114). Within the narrative’s conclusion, the poem, *Power Erodes Like Granite* articulates this vision. Thematically, *Power Erodes Like Granite* explores my (re)developed white identity as part of a destructive force that works as “an avalanche, a rockslide / that obliterates old highways and / worn trailways” and advocates for changing whiteness from within. On the surface this feels antithetical to “a vision of healing” as Howard (2016, p. 116) asserts; however, what follows these natural processes of destruction is the construction of “new / paths with new destinations”. In this construction is the advocacy for my new white identity that allows me to “be the / new water in spring / that melts and flows into clear / pools of life, sources / of transformation, growth, and rebirth.” This new growth is a vision of healing for both myself and those whom I teach. From the imperfect act of breaking down my own identity and being aware of the discomfort and missteps along that journey, I make myself more aware of how I am influential to others. This awareness allows me to be more intentional and more forgiving of myself and others as I move along this path that has “no end point” and in which “perfection is certainly not the goal” (Howard, 2016, p. 116).

Discussion

In this section, I will link the details from the autoethnographic poetic narrative in Chapter 4 to the findings section by addressing the research questions of this study. As shared in Chapter 1 there is one large research question and three sub questions. I will first address each of

the sub questions and then using those responses summarize this section by addressing the overarching research question. This study seeks to answer this large research question:

1. How can I keep myself from reinscribing whiteness, white supremacy, and enacting white privilege as a white teacher educator?

To better address this larger idea, I will address the following sub-questions:

- 1.1 How do I reconcile my whiteness, which cannot be denied, with my responsibility to teach educators to create and sustain just and equitable classrooms for all learners?
- 1.2 How am I reflective/reflexive about my own identity (re)development through, and as a result of, the emotions connected to seeing and understanding my whiteness?
- 1.3 How can I authentically explore the fluid process of my white identity (re)development that encourages and supports an antiracist pedagogy?

Research Question 1.1

The first sub question of this study asked, how do I reconcile my whiteness, which cannot be denied, with my responsibility to teach educators to create and sustain just and equitable classrooms for all learners? As I look back at this research question its phrasing seems odd to me. The implication that I can arrive at a prescriptive way to resolve or settle my personal whiteness, that is my embodiment of the structural systems of whiteness, with a broader teaching philosophy of justice and equity feels at this point almost laughable. Based upon the findings of this study, any reconciliation of my whiteness with my role as a white teacher educator must be deeper and more fluid than a simple or discreet proclamation. My study finds that only through continuing to work, actively and intentionally within the messy, flawed, uncomfortable and imperfect process of white identity (re)development is it possible for a white teacher educator to

become more positively acquainted with who they are as a white person within the larger system of whiteness.

As is explored in Chapter 1, the power-laden structures of the k-12 education and teacher education systems perpetuate the influences of whiteness and maintain an inequitable environment for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2017; Thompson, 2003). As my subjectivity statement shows I have been, and continue to be, a beneficiary of these systems. This autoethnographic study has continued to help me see the ways in which my navigation of these systems are intimately linked to my individual white identity and how that identity is a product of the larger system that is whiteness (Haney-Lopez, 2006; Leonardo, 2002; Roedigger, 2002). Recognizing that there is a distinction between these two ideas, that my own white identity is different from and not blindly beholden to whiteness at large, is one of the primary means by which I begin the fluid process of transforming my white identity in my teacher education classroom.

The introduction and rising action of my autoethnography presents the earliest interactions in seeing my white identity in relationship to the larger idea of whiteness. I explore my origins as a white person who is a product of the invisible influences of whiteness and interpret my actions, thinking, and feelings in response to those influences. Narratively, I use public settings to place myself within this larger system and document my reactions/interactions with being exposed and challenged by what I perceive as different from me. Thematically, in this section of the plot, I use metaphors that show the hidden influences of whiteness that I, in retrospect, did not see and claimed ignorance of. These early experiences of the invisible influences of “A white-washed state of existence that / blankets the world under a cloak of homogeneity” (*Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss*), while uncomfortable to acknowledge are

important to address as they represent the fundamentalist/contact stages of my (re)development (Helms 2020; Howard, 2016). These beginning steps, are also the infancy of my emotional engagement with fear, shame and guilt, and loss/grief that become a central part of recognizing how much influence whiteness has on my world view.

As well, within the earlier stages of the plot my questioning about the influences on my teaching praxis are also shared. As I am first reflecting on these encounters, my initial reactions are to rhetorically question my intentions/motivations and emotionally repel, through shame and guilt, responsibility for making myself or my students uncomfortable (hooks, 1994; Matias, 2016; Sleeter, 2017). However, as the plot moves into the rising action and the climax this interaction with my teaching identity changes. As the plot comes to its most conflicted point, I become more critical about being cowardly, fearful, and passive. And, in this climatic moment, I actively begin the disconnect of my white identity from whiteness by moving through the guilt and shame that I link to the act of teaching toward hope in the agency that I possess.

The final segments of the plot reveal more direct movement toward the transformationist orientation and autonomous schema as I reflect on what it means to consider the hopeful possibilities of this (re)development process (Helms 2020; Howard, 2016). While the shifts and pivots in this section do not represent definitive actions, they do show a more active emotional engagement that is open to the exploration of what being white means within a world that is not just or equitable for people of color. The openness of the falling action and the conclusion of the narrative show that I am reflecting on the fact that there will not be a fixed ending to this process and that in that reality there is “A happy exhaustion of noticing and acknowledging / that not all things need to be aligned to be better than / yesterday” (from *The Beauty of Asymmetry*).

By acknowledging that coming to any understanding about who I am as a white teacher educator is a process allows me to become more adept at seeing and then responding to the changing system of whiteness. This work challenges me to continuously be open to see this system for all that it is. Being able to recognize this system is but a beginning step to making my classroom more just and equitable for all learners. Adopting the reality that this process remains unfinished, frees me to be open to changing ways in which I must become responsible for creating a classroom that is just and equitable. Being constantly reflective on my teaching practices that are conditioned by whiteness and linked to my white identity also reminds me that I must be diligent in how I exemplify a classroom that supports the needs of all students. There is no end or summative moment in which this process comes to complete reconciliation as the interactions with whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are in a constant cycle and change.

Research Question 1.2

The second sub-question of this dissertation is, how am I reflective/reflexive about my own identity (re)development through, and as a result of, the emotions connected to seeing and understanding my whiteness? Emotions, by their very nature, are personal, interpretative, and conditional (Golman, 1995; Krill, 1978; Muncey, 2010). Each person understands and connects their emotional selves to specific experiences, physical reactions, and complex responses that take time and intentionality to unpack. Within this study, the process to expose and engage my emotions relative to my white identity (re)development was uncomfortable as it was persistently fraught with moments of genuine clarity about aspects of my identity that I did not want to expose or acknowledge publicly. Further, this process was also plagued by lingering doubts about my own authenticity as I consistently questioned my intentions in making emotionally

vulnerable claims that could be perceived as performative, self-glorifying, or self-flagellating (Denzin, 2014; Muncey, 2010).

Being emotionally vulnerable comes with the potential for being critiqued for not only the substance of that vulnerability but also the motivations behind sharing it. As Freire (2000/1970) notes there is a necessary skepticism when the oppressors give up some power or show some weakness to the oppressed. As I reflect now on the open and exposed process of engaging with my emotional understanding of being a white teacher educator, I can see that such skepticism is a necessary part of crafting a meaningful and authentic product. This skepticism must be both applied by external sources, the readers of this work, as well as by the author in reflecting on my own work. Acknowledging, as frequently and as clearly as possible, my subjectivity is a clear first step in bridging this skeptical divide. However, it is by no means the only way that I should vividly clarify my perspectives and intentions.

As an openly reflective tool, the poetic narrative autoethnography that I created by applying Anzaldua's (2012/1987) *mestiza* consciousness intentionally ruptures and sifts through the epiphanies about my relationship with whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy that I was willing to address. The choices I made about which epiphanies to address and which I chose to not explore is certainly one of the limitations of this study (Denzin, 2014). However, the use of poetic language, theme, metaphor, and setting all worked to allow me to become better acquainted with my emotions within the narrative (Denzin, 2014; Furman, 2007; Hanauer, 2012a, 2012b). As each separate poem navigates among different locations, characters, and nuances of my experience, I was able to use poetic devices to better document the evolution of my white identity relative to those emotions that I employed to understand and expose it.

The reflection on my emotional self carries with it value in understanding more about my own emotional origins and navigations. As this is an internal and individual process, it will always be limited by my own willingness to be honest with myself. As I look back on the poetic narrative autoethnography and understand it as an evocative tool for engaging my emotions two larger determinations about this process are apparent.

First, the methodology I used to gather, generate, and then share my emotions contributed to a deeper connection with the emotions of guilt/shame. Through the development of a new myth in the final step of the mestiza consciousness writing process, I witnessed a shift away from being consumed by fear, guilt, and shame in my emotional reaction to (re)developing my white identity through hope and pride. Seeing that there is hope and pride in participating in the on-going and imperfect process of becoming more aware of who I am as a white teacher educator was unexpected, surprising, and an altogether invigorating finding.

Second, the theme of visibility/invisibility was of vital importance to my understanding of how to interpret my emotions within the narrative. As this theme existed across all the portions of the plot it was a constant reminder about how I worked to expose emotions that might otherwise have been kept hidden or needed more clarity to make their implications more intentional. In sharing my interactions with and reactions to emotions through symbols of reflection (mirrors), as ghosts, or as ideas that are made more visible, I worked more to experience them throughout the entire narrative. This theme worked as a poetic and narrative tool that made each emotion more visible and available for reflection.

Research Question 1.3

The third sub-question of this dissertation is, how can I authentically explore the fluid process of my white identity (re)development that encourages and supports an antiracist

pedagogy? Two distinct elements of this research question need to be addressed specifically before they can be connected to each other. First, I will consider some of the issues around what makes the fluid process of white identity (re)development exploration authentic. And second, I will look at how that process connects with the pedagogical choice to pivot toward antiracism. Once these two elements are explored, they can then be combined to address the overall aim of this sub-question.

I struggle to address the question of authenticity in this study as it is difficult, if not impossible for me, being the only author, analyst, and interpreter to suggest that I am entirely honest throughout this work. I can confidently say that I have shared personal truths about my experiences as a white person. I can confidently say that the experiences shared in the epiphanies/poems did in fact happen. And, I can confidently say that throughout the writing of this autoethnography and the process of reflecting on it I have come to better know myself as a teacher educator who is white. However, I cannot confidently claim that this exploration is authentic as that determination ultimately exists with the reader.

If this narrative and the process it shares is plausible and believable to a reader it can convey, but not guarantee, a truth or verisimilitude (Chang 2008; Denzin, 2014). As this work fits into poststructuralist thinking, I understand that the measure of plausibility and believability are as situated as the lived experiences of each person reading this (Derrida, 1976). When it comes to race-related questions of power and voice, a white man's 'truth' should be questioned as the privileged pathways I have navigated to arrive at my reality have been curated and guided by years of benefitting from the oppression of others (Baldwin 1998/1963; Leonardo, 2002). As well, I know, that even after the time and effort to better understand my own motivations there still exists a part of me that wants this narrative to represent me as being a "good" white person;

a performative label that is regressive to the aims of antiracism (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016; Love, 2019). Finally, I recognize that these are limitations that in some form all white people who are engaged in this work must encounter and work to address (Helms, 2020; Love, 2019; Leonardo, 2002). While this acknowledgment does not answer the central question about my own authenticity in this endeavor, it does position my work within the collection of other white scholars who likewise are challenged by the conundrum of authenticity. This acknowledgement provides a frame of reference for how to approach my research.

The second consideration in this research question is about connecting the process that my study shows, and that I continue to embark on, to an antiracist pedagogy. The discussion of several different pedagogical perspectives that are interrelated with antiracism are shared at the end of Chapter 2. Each of these teaching perspectives is also connected to the white identity development models of Helms (2020) and Howard (2016) that I have found linked in numerous ways across my poetic narrative (Figure 2.1 in Appendix A). When these pedagogical perspectives and models are aligned with my narrative there is a notable progression of my white identity that moves from the overly, negative, racially developed portions of the identity models toward the more positively developed white identity schemas/orientations. This overall movement suggests a shift in my thinking toward an antiracist pedagogical tendency.

The contact schema and fundamentalist orientations of the white identity models are largely focused in the introduction of the narrative as either a blissfully ignorant or purposefully unaware condition of my learning about being white (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016). As the action of the narrative rises, and my awareness of the emotions of fear, shame, and guilt relative to recognizing more about being white becomes clearer, so does my progression among the disintegration schema of Helms (2020) model. Within the climatic poems of the narrative a

transition toward the integrationist orientation and the pseudo-independence/immersion-emersion schemas can be found as I continue to embrace my white identity more fully through active questioning of not only my role as a teacher, but also the larger decision to give power to my voice as an agent against racism. This agency comes to a hope-filled and forward-facing crescendo in the climax with my intention of no longer being a passive observer, but realizing that, “I must stand up” (from *Three, I Must Stand Up*). It is this declaration that marks the shift into the falling action of the plot that has the clearest movements toward the transformationist and autonomous models that are not the end points, but the fluid points of realization that this (re)development process has no end (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016).

The pedagogical implications tied to these identity progressions are far less clear cut and linear as antiracist, abolitionist, accomplice/co-conspirator, and race-ally pedagogical thinking overlap and inter-relate. One of the first connected elements of the pedagogical positions that is noteworthy is the thematic link between the natural process of destruction and abolitionist teaching. This theme’s prevalence across the narrative as a necessary part of my white identity (re)development process is telling as it suggests that I recognize the importance of “erosion’s / slow agent of destructive purpose” as a means to bring “transformation, growth, and rebirth” (from *Power Erodes Like Granite*). Pedagogically, this abolitionist tendency was a surprise to me as I never expected myself to adopt an outwardly destructive mode of thinking about whiteness within the classroom. However, given that part of the modality of antiracist teaching is challenging the discourses of whiteness such that it can be identified for critique and ultimately, dismantled, this link makes more sense (Case & Hemmings, 2005; DiAngelo, 2011; Sefa Dei, 1996; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). It should also be noted that this dismantling/destructive mode is oriented toward whiteness as a system and not at white individuals (Amcio, 2015; Laughter,

2019; Leonardo, 2002). In my narrative, the abolitionist implications of destruction, those metaphors that showcase destruction, are largely not self-directed and fit with this thinking. Those images of destruction that are internalized to my own identity discuss the breaking/fissuring of former beliefs to make room for newly developed ideas that are more directed toward the later stages of my identity development.

Another aspect of the pedagogical considerations shared in this study looks at the debate about idealized vs critiqued allyship in teaching (Patton & Bondi, 2015). The alignment model in Figure 2.1 in Appendix A, shows that, depending on the frame of understanding, these two versions of the same pedagogy could be located in very different places along the white identity (re)development process. What occurs in my narrative, is an outright debate about where I position myself. In several poems, I question my own agenda as a teacher in addressing topics related to whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy. And in several poems, I am critical about the performative nature of how I am perceived as an ally who is or is not willing to subject myself to scrutiny. The narrative offers some resolution in the poem *Clark Kent is the Real Hero*, as I make clear that the outwardly and symbolically driven larger-than-life Superman ally archetype is less genuine to me and that I have come to see the quiet and sincere, mild-mannered, Clark Kent to be a more meaningful, flawed, and honest race ally. As this poem comes toward the end of the narrative this recognition comes with the emotions of hope that are associated with the autonomous schema and the transformationist orientation (Helms, 2020; Howard, 2016).

Finally, one of the largest gaps in the narrative in considering the active connection between my thinking, acting, and feeling and changing my pedagogical positioning comes from a lack of attention to what I am willing to sacrifice. Beginning with some of the assertions in the climax and continuing through the latter parts of the narrative there are bold assertions about

how I want to operate pedagogically. However, what is missing from these statements is the translation of those assertions to actions. There is no clear example, in the narrative, of moments in which I adopt the co-conspirator/accomplice stance of putting my own safety, neither physical, monetary, nor emotional, on the line (Love, 2019). Despite making numerous claims that this is my goal and intention, the moments in which I actually take risks and become vulnerable are all calculated, measured, and in situations in which I am undeniably in control.

When these three understandings about the pedagogical perspectives that are shared in the narrative are placed together a clearer picture can be drawn about the overall link to antiracist teaching. The employment of the abolitionist thinking about utilizing the deconstruction of whiteness to better understand it and ultimately threaten it, fits nicely into an antiracist pedagogical position (Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019). By separating this destructive perspective between the larger structures that maintain whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy and white people this becomes, for me, a part of the practice of teaching that moves toward building a new way to understand the world beyond whiteness's centrality (Leonardo, 2002). As a participant in the antiracist classroom space, attention to my role as an ally that is genuine, rather than performative, is necessary. And, while it may be easy to make large statements of intent within that performance, being a co-conspirator requires that I be willing to take risks, something that is not documented in this narrative.

The sub-question addressed in this section considers how authenticity in the fluid process of my white identity (re)development encourages and supports an antiracist pedagogy. My authenticity in this process is dependent upon making the product I share plausible, believable, and ultimately worthy of the reader's trust. While I may consider that every element of the emotional, thematic, and personal identity (re)development shared here is honest and true, it is

importantly up to the reader to decide if they agree. When this question of authenticity is linked to the support and encouragement for an antiracist pedagogy a similar level of skepticism is needed. A teacher who works toward being more antiracist is one who does not seek the performative labels associated with allyship but is one who is actively working to understand whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege so that it can be dismantled. As well, the antiracist teacher gives up, to some degree, their safety and security, by engaging in the ongoing and fluid, and highly criticized process of knowing themselves as white.

Research Question 1

This study's overall goal was to address this larger research question: How can I keep myself from reinscribing whiteness, white supremacy, and enacting white privilege as a white teacher educator? In the sections above I have responded to the three sub-questions that nuance this larger question by considering the connected elements of my white identity to the larger systems of whiteness, by understanding how engaging with my emotions is a necessary part of the (re)development process, and by clarifying the links between the authenticity of my shared experience and my move toward an antiracist pedagogy. From these responses and the findings of this study, I would respond to my larger research question in this way: there is no definitive, fixed, or finite way in which to prevent the reinscription of whiteness, white supremacy, or white privileged behavior as a white teacher educator. Only through an authentic, engaged, and intensely focused developmental process that seeks to recognize and respond to the ever-present influences of whiteness can I move toward the goal of threatening the further entrenchment of these systems among the pre-service teachers I instruct.

My movement toward this goal is an asymmetrical and imperfect journey in which I will make mistakes, expose flawed thinking and deeds, and be criticized from many directions.

However, as the theme of the natural process of destruction in my poetic narrative shows, there is hope. By working to break down the emotionally connected pieces of my white identity and by becoming better attuned to seeing my own identity progression I work to “be the new water in spring / that melts and flows into clear / pools of life, sources / of transformation, growth, and rebirth” (from *Power Erodes Like Granite*).

Any new areas of growth that are initiated by these destructive forces not only influence me but also those future teachers I teach. This autoethnography works as a public declaration of my thinking, experiences, and desire to continue engaging in being an actively antiracist white teacher educator. By modeling in this writing, *a* way (not *the* way), to understand my own white identity (re)development I hope to encourage others to take part in similar endeavors. While poetic writing, narrative design tools, and the autoethnographic research method were the tools that allowed me to make an authentic effort in this realm there are various other reflective tools that other white teachers will find valuable. No matter which tools a white teacher educator chooses the most important finding of my research is that they are and remain willing to intentionally take part in this fluid, intimidating, humbling, and fulfilling process. For myself, this dissertation marks only the beginning of more introspection and investigation as I work to see and dismantle the damaging influences of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege.

Limitations

This section will share three of the larger limitations of this study and offer some comments on how I understand my work in relationship to them. First, I will note the issues that exist around the (re)centering nature of whiteness in academic work done by white scholars. Then, I will address the limitations around how authenticity of this autoethnographic work can

be judged. And lastly, I will return to some of the critiques of evocative autoethnography that were discussed in Chapter 3 and that exist as limitations regarding this work's generalizability.

(Re)Centering Whiteness

The most prominent limitation of this dissertation is that the invisible system of whiteness will always work to re-center whiteness itself in academic work. This critique is discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation and notes specifically that there is white privilege being exercised in the choice to make this work centered on and solely concerned with whiteness (Leonardo, 2013). This is an exceptionally valid critique of this dissertation. As I have engaged in understanding my identity as a white teacher educator attempting to become more antiracist and working to create more equitable spaces for students of color, the conversation moves away from humanizing students of color to how whiteness exists in the classroom space (Matias & Mackey, 2015). Likewise, as I navigate to understand my white identity (re)development through my lived experiences, whiteness is the central lens and perspective through which I am seeing those moments. The presence of whiteness is overtly addressed throughout this dissertation, and while I attempt to better address it as separate from myself, it still casts its persistent shadow on this work (Leonardo, 2013).

This limitation suggests that the best I can be in acknowledging that my work is and will always be influenced by whiteness, is an actively antiracist white person, living, writing, and thinking in a world that privileges me. My active use of that privilege to challenge, critique, and implicate white supremacy is vital to continuing the unending journey toward being a more effective antiracist teacher educator. And the intentional understanding of how my white identity is connected to the large system of whiteness is integral to that ongoing, necessary, and fluid process.

Judging Authenticity

While the existence of specific cultural events that are referenced in the narrative can be confirmed by external sources and the parameters of personal events could likewise be verified by the individual participants my emotional responses to these events are, by their very nature, mine, and mine alone (Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014). This presents, what has already been noted several times in this discussion, a limitation to the perception of authenticity. Judging whether this writing is an authentic representation of my experience as a white teacher educator is ultimately in the hands of the reader. While I can, and feel like I do, make every effort to share the events of my narrative in their most honest form it is up to the consumer of this work to connect with the truth in these events. Poststructuralism, part of this work's foundational framework, supports that we each develop an understanding of our world views from our subjective interpretation of our experiences (Barker & Jane, 2016; Derrida, 1976). The world views that are generated are uniquely our own. This study is limited by how each reader's own experiences with whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy have conditioned them to interpret my experiences and my reflections on those experiences.

Evocative Autoethnography and Generalizability

Another prominent limitation of this work is the critique of evocative autoethnography as a valid method of qualitative research that adds to the scholarship addressing whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy in teacher education (Anderson, 2006; Helms, 2020; Leonardo, 2002, 2013). I willingly acknowledge that vanity in completing an autoethnography is a potentially unavoidable flaw in crafting a poetic narrative autoethnography related to emotions (Matias, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2015). As I exist as both researcher and the subject of the research and as I crafted, edited, analyzed, and interpreted the data it is impossible to avoid

nostalgic remembrances of events in ways that could make me look either better or dramatically worse than I actually was in the moment (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014). In writing about these moments, whether good or ill, I confronted Chang's (2008) critique about the overreliance on personal memory data, as I found it difficult to find corroborating evidence to support how I felt about a specific situation that happened in the past. As well, I also acknowledge the general critiques about the generalizability of evocative autoethnography that Anderson (2006) and others share and that are detailed in Chapter 3.

While I do not intend to wade into the large and lengthy arguments between autoethnographers and qualitative researchers about the merits of autoethnography as a research practice at large, I have come to a necessary conclusion about my choice in utilizing this methodology given its limitations. For my own practice as a white teacher educator, in our present politically divisive climate regarding race, any act of self-exploration that has as its intention to begin to develop a more honest and engaged understanding of one's own experience with whiteness, however self-glorifying or self-flagellating the product may be, is *never* a wasted effort (Leonardo, 2013). The decision I made to make this self-exploration public was not made lightly, nor did that decision intend, as is noted in the problem statement in Chapter 1, to showcase a singular correct way to navigate these contentious ideas. Given these statements, I willingly accept that this research's findings are limited to my experience. And I further accept that these results may not be generalizable to all white teacher educators. However, that was never this study's intent. The purpose of this study was to show *one* unique way to vulnerably experience my own self-exploration through emotions connected to (re)developing my white identity toward a more just and equitable antiracist pedagogy.

Implications for Future Research and a Not-so-final Conclusion

There is more work to be done to empower white teacher educators to be better suited to engage in personal reflections on their white identity (Howard, 2016; Leonardo, 2013). More research and methodological work to operationalize and destigmatize this process can be done such that it becomes an intentional part of preservice teaching education as well as an ongoing part of in-service teacher development (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Love, 2019; Thompson, 2003). When embracing and talking about the emotions that are connected to whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are demonized all white people are less likely to engage in critical reflection (Matias, 2016). While conducting a poetic narrative autoethnography is one way to engage in this process, it is not the only way. More research needs to be done about how to make reflective practices about whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy meaningful, approachable, and, most importantly, more intentional for all teachers. Continuing the current trajectory of ostracizing the discussion about whiteness into singular multi-cultural education classes or not having the conversation at all will never address the biased interactions of teachers with the growing population of students of color (Sleeter, 2017).

This study also suggests that there are under theorized intersectionalities among teacher educators that also need to be developed. While I limited the epiphanies selected for my autoethnography to those connected to my teaching/teacher education experience and my experiences with race/whiteness, I found that other elements of my subjectivity were also relevant as they could not be entirely separated from each other (Crenshaw, 1991; Leonardo, 2013). For example, research that considers the privileged status that my male gender identity gives me as a white person teaching largely female teacher candidates would be a worthwhile topic to explore. The concept of gender related to whiteness would also be especially important

to investigate as the interpretation, use, and engagement with emotions may be different for male-identifying white teachers. Gender is but one example of the multiple identity elements that could be explored; others could include: religion, geography, sexual orientation, economic status (of the teacher or the students), etc.

Finally, one other area of future study that this research recommends is entirely personal and comes directly from the overwhelming conclusion that I have reached following the writing of this dissertation. Becoming uncomfortably familiar with and non-complacent about my identity as a white teacher educator is an on-going, difficult, nuanced, and necessary process that I must actively take part in continuing to pursue. In truth, I think that I began this whole dissertation process believing, deep down, that I would be able to summarize my work with a final line that at least insinuated, “Look at me! I did it! Now, I’m antiracist. And guess what, you can be too!” As I look back to earlier versions of my dissertation proposals, I considered that my work would serve as some form of “permission slip” for other white teacher educators to undergo a similar process of encountering their whiteness. While I do still believe that all teachers/teacher educators should continuously undergo the active process of reflection about the influence of whiteness on their teaching practices, I feel a much more tempered and measured understanding of what that truly means. My engagement in the intentional look at who I am as a white teacher educator begins with acknowledging that there is no stopping point, no concluding statement of arrival or merit badge of successfully becoming antiracist. There is only,

Peace in the explanation of self as always growing,

even as I creak and shrink; grow weary and tired.

A happy exhaustion of noticing and acknowledging

that not all things need to be aligned to be better than

yesterday. (*The Beauty of Asymmetry*)

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Appendix

Appendix A – Figures Referenced in Chapter 2

Helms (2020) White Identity Development					Allyship- Critiqued				
							Allyship – Idealized		
						Accomplice/Co- Conspirator			
			Abolitionist					Abolitionist	
					Antiracist				
	Pre- contact	Internalizing Racism				Evolving Non-racist Identity			
		Contact	Disintegration	Reintegration	Pseudo- Independence	Immersion/Emersio n	Autonomy		
Howard (2016) White Identity Orientations	Pre- contact	Fundamentalist (Subcodes: thinking, feeling, acting)		Integrationist (Subcodes: thinking, feeling, acting)		Transformationist (Subcodes: thinking, feeling, acting)			
							Antiracist		
						Abolitionist			
						Accomplice/Co-Conspirator			
						Allyship – Idealized			
				Allyship - Critiqued					

Figure 2.1: Aligning Helms' (2020) White Identity Development Schemas and Howard's (2016) White Identity Orientations to 4 pedagogical approaches.

Appendix B - Figures Referenced in Chapter 3

Epoch 1: 1981-2002	Epoch 2: 2002-2015	Epoch 3: 2015-present
Birth to entrance into teacher education undergraduate coursework	Teacher education as a student, Teaching residency and work as secondary education teacher, and becoming a parent.	Working as a teacher educator and entering PhD coursework

Figure 3.1: Epochs of transitions in teaching practice and seminal personal events.

Epiphany	I wonder poem exploring my initial thinking as a teacher in 2004/2005. Considerations and reflection on islamophobia and hate after discussing the September 11, 2001 attacks	Southern identification and regional association to teacher education. Looking at a distinction between the broader culture in which I was raised and the way in which I am discovering my identity.	Whiteness as nuanced and not monolithic. A positional understanding of whiteness and finding a way to “see it”.	“Rather than making the center bigger, including more voices and more cultures, whiteness studies demands a critical examination of the center in the hope that the center will fall apart.” Warren, 1999, p. 197	Written as the first part of a race narrative; birth and upbringing that was conditioned to NOT see my racialized self.
Epiphany Epoch	2	3	3	3	1
Poem Title	First Fall, 2004	Heart-tree	My White Standing Stones	Falling the Center Apart	Ignorance is a certain kind of bliss
Written Epoch	2	3	3	3	3

Figure 3.2: Inventory of epiphanies, epiphany epoch, poem titles, and written epoch.

Epiphany	Written as the second part of a race narrative; First visceral encounter with poverty, race, and homelessness.	Written as the third part of a race narrative; Consideration of student's reaction to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 and students' considerations of themselves as world citizens	From a journal written in my last semester of teaching high school. Looking to a historical understanding/conception of difference related to the "American Dream"	Poem written while teaching high school. No specific date given. Working to address colorblind racism: I don't see color – teacher as savior.
Epiphany Epoch	1	2	2	2
Poem Title	Diversity is a Block on Eddy Street	The Classroom Laboratory	Division in America	I am not a savior
Written Epoch	3	3	2	2

Figure 3.2: continued.

Epiphany	Teaching about school violence (shooting of a student at a school by police officer) and the role of the teacher as ‘protector’. What does it take to be a brave teacher?	The bravery of calling out a racist teacher/being thankful for being called a racist. A student confronted me following a class meeting in which I made a racist joke, that I thought was okay. My guilt, shame, and embarrassment linger to this day.	Reflection on the power granted to teachers by their role as “steadfast sources of knowledge” A question I ask my teacher candidates... “what does it mean to know something?”	National, state, and local protests happening after the killing of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, Ahmaud Aubrey. Attempting to understand why I am NOT participating in the protests.	From a journal written in my last semester of teaching high school. What is the impact of teaching about the Rwandan genocide... on my students?... on me as a teacher?... on me as a white teacher?
Epiphany Epoch	3	3	3	3	2
Poem Title	Teacher Coward	A Note of Thanks	Power Erodes Like Granite	Minneapolis Burns, May 2020	On the 20 th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide
Written Epoch	3	3	3	3	2

Figure 3.2: continued.

Original Poem	Edited Poem
I wonder poem Spring 2005 On our first day I wondered little dumb things; I wonder... will they like me? I wonder... will my hair look funny? I wonder... I my fly zipped up? Now, a couple weeks later; I wonder things I never thought I would: I wonder how much time it takes to believe someone you have never met; should die? I wonder how much time it takes to develop hate? I wonder how do students learn to associate bigoted names with other people? I wonder if they really believe the hate they claim? Tonight sitting here I wonder one thing more... Why am I so afraid of speaking to them and what they say?	First Fall, 2004 On my first day, I wonder little dumb things: ...will they like me? ...how will I introduce myself? ...does my hair look funny? ...is my fly zipped up? Short weeks later, I wonder things I never thought I would: ...How much time does it take to develop hate? ...How much hate does it take to believe someone should die? ...How do students learn to associate bigoted names with other people? ...Do they really believe the hate they claim? Tonight, I wonder one more thing, ...Why am I so afraid of them and what they say?

Figure 3.3: Example of editing strategy for pre-created poetry pieces in step 2 of the autoethnography process.

Noted in a memo	Thinking/Creative Process	Poem text
“I can Breathe and How that Matters.” April 20-21, 2021 On all 3 counts of murdering George Floyd, the White police officer is found guilty. After the verdict was read a friend of mine, who is white, said, “it feels like I can breath again after so long holding my breath.”	Taking stock of the physical act of breathing while on a walk. – actions in a first-person context. Feeling of the pulse and connection to nervousness around discussing whiteness/race in the political climate in which I live and teach. Questioning what it means to have a voice that is empowered by white privilege. How does that link to emotions connected to that feeling?	I can breathe... Why that matters, April 20, 2021 After the verdict* was read I exhaled long and slow And felt from the souls of my feet a Deep lightheadedness rise up my body. A floating feeling as on air; the next breath came in and shuddering, my lungs filled out and expanded beyond the pressure of a knee to the back of my neck. For that breath, I feel guilt and shame. Because I enjoyed it. I feel the oxygen expanding the wet alveoli of my lungs and the beat of my heart rushing life filling blood through my body. In that moment, I surged with a restless energy that was life; for I could breathe. And that matters. *On April 20th, 2021, for the murder of George Floyd, Derek Chauvin was found guilty on three counts: unintentional second-degree murder; third-degree murder; and second-degree manslaughter.

Figure 3.4: Example of creative/thinking process for a memo developed into poetry in step 2 of the autoethnography process.

Epiphany	Thinking/Creative Process	Poem text
The bravery of calling out a racist teacher/being thankful for being called a racist. A student confronted me following a class meeting in which I made a racist joke, that I thought was okay. My guilt, shame, and embarrassment linger to this day.	Locating the scene and providing enough backstory so that the moment makes logical sense, and the reader is asked to participate. Pronouns are important for tone: I want the language to be direct and intentional to the characters. My voice and intention MUST shift throughout the poem.	A note of thanks <i>Referring to the student who was brave enough to show me that what I thought was a joke was racist.</i> I. The scene: My office is a place of power. A curated space that I use to project a Wizard of Oz level of influence With a curtain keenly hidden just around the corner. When you entered that space, at my request, I anticipated your defensiveness. I anticipated putting you at ease, but only just a little; certainly a power play; intentional and systematic. Sitting down you showed me body language, knife-like and cutting edge keen; I read it wrong, I can see, now, clearly. I swelled my inner-teacher up into my shoulders and cast my white shadow long and bright Expecting you to be defensive, affronted, incredulous, dumbfounded at my accusations. “I am not seeing as much effort as I think you could be putting forward,” I said. Projecting all the experienced teacher provenance I could muster. Your locked look arrested me. “You are right,” you said. “It’s hard to put in effort when your teacher is as racist as you are.”

Figure 3.5: Example of creative/thinking process for an epiphany developed into poetry in step 2 of the autoethnography process.

Epiphany	Thinking/Creative Process	Poem text
		II. The problem “Don’t you get that you can’t say things like that?” “But I didn’t mean it like that?” “Well, that’s how it came out and that’s what it meant.” “But I’m not racist. I mean I teach about equity. We talk about it everyday.” “You talk about it, but you don’t teach with it.” “...” “I don’t work hard, as hard as I do, for racists.” “...” III. The thank you note You are braver than me. You are bolder than me. You are willing to take a chance on me. You are willing to risk much for me. Thank you for calling me a racist.

Figure 3.5: continued.

Poem Title	Ignorance is a certain kind of bliss			Diversity is a Block on Eddy Street			Heart-tree			Division in America			Intone My White Body			First Fall 2004			After the Tsunami			My White Standing Stones		
<i>Ruptures</i>	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21
Fear				X	X	X										X	X	X		X	X			
Anger - self			X			X								X	X			X						
Anger - other											X	X												
Pride			X					X				X	X											
Shame	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X	X	X							X		X
Guilt	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X	X							X	X	
Disgust			X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X					
Envy										X			X	X	X								X	X
Loss/Grief				X	X	X			X													X		X
Pity	X	X	X		X			X		X														
Defensiveness	X		X						X	X	X	X	X	X						X		X		
Joy																								
Despair				X		X	X					X		X	X	X	X	X					X	
Care		X																						
Love		X																						
Cowardice				X	X	X									X	X		X						
Hope													X	X	X									
Curiosity					X				X		X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X

Figure 3.6: Communicating the Rupture Chart summative after 3 readings.

Poem Title	A Note of Thanks			Minneapolis Burns, May 2020			Teacher Coward			I can breathe... Why that matters. April 20, 2021			Falling the Center Apart			On the 20 th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide		
<i>Ruptures</i>	7 2 1	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21
Fear			X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X				
Anger - self	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X				X		X
Anger - other																X		
Pride	X	X	X															
Shame	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
Guilt	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
Disgust		X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X				X	X	
Envy																		
Loss/Grief		X	X			X		X	X				X	X				
Pity								X			X					X		
Defensiveness	X	X	X		X													
Joy											X	X						
Despair				X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Care																		
Love																		
Cowardice			X	X	X	X	X	X	X							X		X
Hope			X							X	X	X		X	X			
Curiosity									X					X	X			

Figure 3.6: continued.

Poem Title	Gift of the Ghost			Superman			Power Erodes Like Granite			The Beauty of Asymmetry			I am not a savior		
<i>Ruptures</i>	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21	7 21	9 21	10 21
Fear	X	X	X	X											
Anger - self				X	X	X									
Anger - other					X	X									
Pride				X		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Shame	X	X	X	X	X	X							X	X	X
Guilt	X	X	X			X							X	X	X
Disgust		X		X	X	X									
Envy			X												
Loss/Grief			X	X			X				X	X			
Pity							X								
Defensiveness				X	X										
Joy							X	X	X	X	X	X			
Despair				X		X					X				
Care			X				X	X	X			X			
Love			X					X	X			X			
Cowardice	X		X	X		X									
Hope	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	XX	X	X	X			
Curiosity					X	X									

Figure 3.6: continued.

Emotion	Defined	Example
Defensiveness	Quality of deflecting a discomforting idea/concept	“Don’t you get that you can’t say things like that?” / “But I didn’t mean it like that?” “Well, that’s how it came out and that’s what it meant.” / “But I’m not racist. I mean I teach about equity. We talk about it everyday.” <i>from A Note of Thanks</i>
Fear	Feeling of vulnerability or anxiety related to a thought or action.	I wonder one more thing: // ...Why am I so afraid of them and what they say? <i>from First Fall, 2004</i>
Anger – self	Feeling of intense frustration or angst directed toward oneself	20 years from now those skulls will lose force and gravity becoming exploited pieces of / propaganda for one off lesson plans and heavy-handed preaching by teachers like me. <i>from On the 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide</i>
Anger – other	Feeling of intense frustration or angst directed toward another person/people	Get the job, have the family, work the job, retire. Die. // Is this the American Dream? <i>from Division in America</i>
Shame	Feeling associated with something dishonorable or morally bad done by oneself or another	for freedom and racing up the limbs and boughs of American ladders of success promised to all but granted to the privileged few that can step back past the orchard walls. <i>from Heart-tree</i>
Guilt	Feeling of responsibility for actively doing something dishonorable or morally bad or NOT doing the right thing.	The rocks circle ‘round a rotating consciousnesses in which <i>the proverbial shit flows only one direction</i> keeping the stone’s white pure and unblemished. <i>from White Standing Stones</i>
Disgust	Feeling of intense revulsion or animus for a specific thing/idea/person/concept.	The smell of piss in public and a shamble of brown coat, dark skin, crumbling white shoes, thinning black hair, deep blue mechanic pants with stains like oil that stink like shit. <i>from On the 10th Block of Eddy Street</i>
Pity	Feeling of sympathy for another who is lesser/below in some way.	Asleep in a doorway in the San Francisco sun is a black man with no home. / A specimen of the <i>other</i>. <i>from On the 10th Block of Eddy Street</i>

Figure 3.7: Definitions of emotions and examples from poems during “communicating the rupture” phase.

Emotion	Defined	Example
Envy	Feeling of intense jealousy and longing for something one does not have.	Hands that ache from clinched fists that are / muscle weary and cracked from what, hard work? Hands that know/ no thousand cuts; know nothing of centuries weariness and combat fatigue. / No visible scars of labors and history; false hopes and loss. <i>from Intone my White Body</i>
Loss/Grief	Feeling of the absence of something one once had, but no longer possesses.	Without a center / around which to spin it is the futile and furtive / performance to maintain a doomed species. / When I question the center where does /it fall away from? <i>from Falling the Center Apart</i>
Despair	Feeling of low-ness or lack of something	20 years from now we won't see the difference between genocide and lunch time; because the / cafeteria menu will be more important. <i>from On the 20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide</i>
Cowardice	Feeling of active withdrawal from an uncomfortable or dangerous circumstance that might threaten a viewpoint or standing.	It's a Tuesday, after a Monday after another Tuesday when my cowardice is on full display. Who do I condemn today and who do I support? <i>from Teacher Coward</i>
Pride	Feeling of intense satisfaction with place, behavior, or another characteristic	Let me be the new water in spring that melts and flows into new clear pools of life and sources of transformation, growth, and rebirth. <i>from Power Erodes Like Granite</i>
Joy	Feeling of intense happiness and celebration	I am not a uniform shade of myself from yesterday. <i>from The Beauty of Asymmetry</i>
Care/Love	Feeling of connection and bonding that is reflected by a desire for positive well-being.	And that's what / you need to know; context always matters, but you are safe to make // mistakes and learn. <i>from Ignorance is a Certain Kind of Bliss</i>
Hope	Feeling of positive and open-ended outlook on a current or future situation.	the ghosts that you make mustn't be the same as mine. <i>from Gift of the Ghost</i>
Curiosity	Feeling of openness about or interrogation of an idea, phenomena, or circumstance.	Would they have listened knowing that he was / to be swept away in the same great white wave? <i>From After the Tsunami</i>

Figure 3.7: continued.

Emotions	Emotional frequency across poems (total number of occurrences/number of readings = emotional frequency score)
Anger - other	1.7
Love	1.7
Care	2.0
Envy	2.3
Joy	2.7
Pity	3.3
Pride	4.7
Defensiveness	5.0
Loss/Grief	5.3
Curiosity	5.7
Anger - self	6.0
Fear	6.3
Cowardice	6.3
Hope	6.3
Despair	8.0
Disgust	9.0
Guilt	11.0
Shame	11.7

Figure 3.8: Emotional frequency in “communicating the rupture” phase.

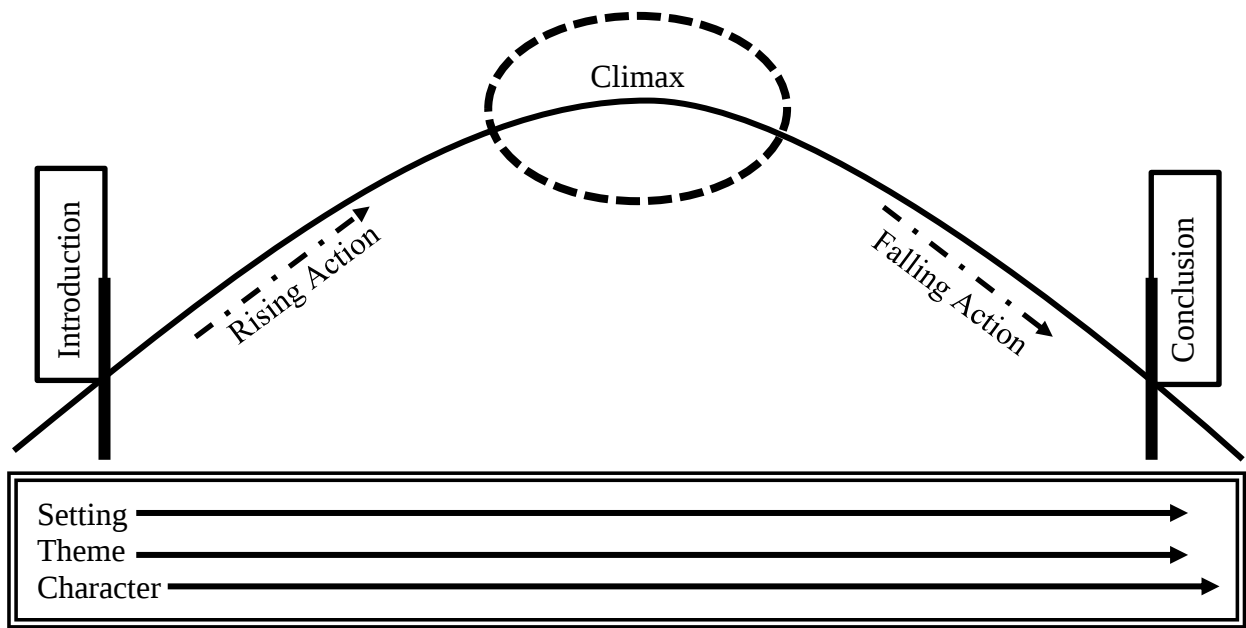


Figure 3.9 : Narrative Arc.

Vita

Born and raised in the mountains of East Tennessee, Scott E. Jenkinson grew up in Chattanooga and around Knoxville, TN. After high school he earned an undergraduate degree in English and a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. After graduating he taught English Language Arts, creative writing, and service learning for 10 years in the high school setting. After that time, he moved to teaching pre-service teachers within Clemmer College at East Tennessee State University, in Johnson City, TN as a clinical instructor, a position he still holds. After two years in the teacher education classroom, he maintained his fulltime teaching job and returned to his undergraduate alma mater, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a concentration in Cultural Studies. His research interests include teacher identity development, creating more equitable classrooms and experiential education pedagogical strategies. Following graduation, he will continue teaching pre-service teachers at East Tennessee State University. He is infinitely grateful for the love, support, and patience of his partner, children, friends, and family.