

DISSERTATION

WUNDERKAMMERS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND GROWING UP SOUTHERN:
A VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SELF-IDENTITY THROUGH
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

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AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

By using the *civil rights era* within a segregated South as a cultural backdrop for this dissertation, I explored the construction of self-identity through narrative text and photographs in the form of a visual autoethnography. Specifically, this study had a two-fold mission: First to explore my self-identity in relation to my Southern culture through narrative text and photographs as primary data; and second, to apply a combined-methods approach in order to paint a complete and holistic portrait of my self-identity construction. Using an overarching notion of Barthesian visual semiotics, I have taken a combined-methods approach by using traditional ethnographic research techniques to produce an autoethnographic narrative with a critical visual methodology in order to draw meaning from a university gallery showing of my photographic exhibition titled: *Wunderkammer: Specimen views of my postmodern life*. The resultant analyses of narrative text and photographs revealed an underlying sub-text of significant racial encounters as well as several social and institutional ideological issues that contributed to my self-identity construction and acculturational journey. Implications from this particular methodological design indicate usefulness not only in photography programs,

but also in allied disciplines such as communication, cultural and media studies, education, sociology, or anthropology. This study contributes its voice to the conversations about autoethnography and self-identity construction through researcher-participant generated photographs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION¹

Things, objects, artifacts, family snapshots. Boxes full of stuff. Some people are great hoarders and my mother was at the top of the list! Half a century later, I am still dealing with this insurmountable amount of artifacts she carefully packed away in our family home, which eventually found their way to my home. But, these items have many stories to tell and they contribute to who I am; they represent who I once was and possibly who I hope to yet become. Hurdley (2006) indicated these objects, on various levels, help define a person's self-identity. It was this notion of objects contributing to one's personal and social identification that prompted Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) over three-and-a-half decades ago, to conduct an in-depth study in Chicago of how objects within the home contributed to one's personal self-identity. Therefore, it is those personal artifacts, which are bound to people of any given culture, that define their past, present, and future. According to these researchers, "Past memories, present experiences, and future dreams of each person are inextricably linked to the objects that comprise his or her environment" (p. ix). Further, they explicitly viewed the "role of objects in people's definition of who they are, of who they have been, and who they wish to become" (p. x) as critical in defining one's self-identity. Thus, many decades ago when my mother packed away all my childhood stuff, little did I realize how it would come to represent my identity. Nor did I anticipate these boxes of childhood objects, or memorabilia,

¹ Some portions of this paper have appeared in previously unpublished manuscripts prepared for various doctorate courses at Colorado State University and the University of Central Missouri and were authored by Terry Ownby.

becoming the central component of a major photography exhibit and also the data for analysis in my doctoral dissertation.

My photography exhibit (Terry Ownby, 2010), *Wunderkammer: Specimen views of my postmodern life*, was composed of nine photographs, each of which had its own narrative story panel describing both the content of the images and their implied ideological connotations. The first three images comprise my elementary school years and they expose my ideas of normality as reflected through dominant ideological institutions and visual mass media representations. Next, the middle three images interrogate my coming of age and its progression from the *Summer of Love* to graduate school and my eventual military service. Finally, the last three images are about getting comfortable with life and where I stand today, five decades later. These images I created in my studio (see Appendix A) using professional conventions to build visual stories from the artifacts collected by my mother and myself. Many of these professionally crafted studio images also contain family, or domestic, snapshots taken throughout the time period depicted.

Muncey (2005) discussed the use of family snapshots or family photographs, which would be classified as *found images* according to Rose (2003, 2007), along with artifacts, as tools of analyses when conducting autoethnographic research. Snapshots, Muncey claimed, help convey truth, or a sense of validity, within the narrative of the researcher-author's writing. Likewise, artifacts contribute to understanding and tend "to fill some of the gaps left by the snapshots, additional evidence is supplied by meaningful artifacts acquired throughout...life" (p. 5). The use of family snapshots as evidence of happy family memories reached its zenith of popularity during the 1950s (Murray, 2008),

which is the starting era for my *Wunderkammer*² project. When combined, snapshots and artifacts can explicate multiple layers of the narrator's discourse, especially when applied with traditional ethnographic and autoethnographic methods, along with critical visual approaches. Thus, both Muncey and Rose advocated the use of and analysis of snapshots and artifacts among other visual cultural data for understanding social and individual identity. But snapshots and familial artifacts are not the only influences in shaping one's self-identity, dominant ideological institutions and visual mass media representations also contribute, especially at the level of social identity. For me, growing up in the racist South of the 1960s was heavily influenced by ideological institutions capable of delivering mass messages, such as the educational system, the church, and the news media. These three institutions made significant contributions to the formation of my self-identity as an impressionable child during that chaotic and contested time period.

Purpose of the Study

Situated against a cultural backdrop during the U.S. *civil rights movement* era, also known as the *segregation controversy* (Rubin, 1957), the purpose of this visual autoethnography, therefore, will be to describe and discover how my personal history and identity was shaped by Southern culture and growing up seeing double: Two diametrically opposed signs above the water fountains, the restrooms, the dining rooms, the bus stops; one for "whites" only and the other for "colored," and my resultant cultural self-portrait that emerged. This is about construction of self-identity. To help understand this issue and myself today as a photographic media educator, I will focus the lens of my at-

² The Germanic term *Wunderkammer* loosely translates as "*cabinet of curiosities*." Its origins date back to the 14th century and was more a room filled with cultural artifacts collected during one's travels rather than a simple piece of furniture or small curio display case. The use of small specimen-like display cases filled with cultural artifacts from my life thus becomes my contemporary miniature *Wunderkammers*.

tention on visual semiotic notions set forth by Barthes (1972, 1977) and critical visual methodology by Rose (2007), in order to analyze the visual images and narrative story panels comprising the gallery showing of my photographic exhibition titled, *Wunderkammer: Specimen views of my postmodern life*, at a Midwestern public state university.

Focus of Inquiry

In my research, the construction of self-identity is generally delineated as a life-long acculturation journey, which is ultimately defined by seminal moments and socio-cultural influences along the way. In order to advance understanding of this central phenomenon, visual semiotic and autoethnographic textual analyses of my *Wunderkammer* project will seek to tease out an answer to the primary question (RQ1):

How is self-identity defined through the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of nine photographic *Wunderkammers* and their accompanying narrative panels?

From this broad issue emerge other subquestions.

- RQ2: What was it like growing up as a privileged white male Baby Boomer in the South in relation to development of my self-identity?
- RQ3: What experiences and defining moments during my acculturation journey of self-identity development turned the direction of my life story concerning racial issues and shaped my cultural perspective?
- RQ4: As my self-identity construction progressed, how has my perception of racial representations changed temporally?

- RQ5: How does this affect my professional craft as a photographic media educator?

Researcher's Perspective

Part of my overall research ideas developed early on in my doctoral studies when I began examining issues of racism and racial stereotyping in various forms of mass media, specifically visual images. This is a recurring theme throughout my writing and research activities. In part, I think this stems from my personal background of growing up during the 1950s and 1960s at the height of the *civil rights movement* and viewing racially charged images on the nightly television (TV) news and in the daily newspaper. My formative elementary school days were from 1960 to 1966, all of which were in a *Jim Crow* South. I attended segregated schools and churches during this time while living in central Florida, near the Atlantic coast, and it was not until I attended junior high school that I physically encountered my first Black³ classmate.

More specifically, this project came to be during the implementation of an empirical quantitative pilot study that was investigating generational differences between traditional aged college students and non-traditional aged students and their perceptions of representation (stereotyping) through visual mass media images. While reflecting on this concept I realized that I could be categorized one of two ways: as a professor and the other as a student working on my doctorate degree. I often have non-traditional students in my classes and some have been nearly my age. Through my reflection on this aspect of

³ In today's climate, people of African descent are referred to as African-Americans. However, during the 1960s and prior, the term *Negro* was typically employed along with the term *colored*. During the 1970s era, the term *Black* became popular, which is still my term of preference today and is the suggested preference by APA (2010, p. 75). Not everyone of dark skin would consider themselves of African descent; therefore I use this term more broadly. For example, once during a discussion with one of my students whom I assumed to be African American promptly corrected me upon my reference to being such. Instead, the student proudly announced a Panamanian heritage and preferred to be addressed as a *Black* person and this situation occurred around 2005, not 1975.

myself, I kept thinking about how I perceive racial representation in visual images. During this time period of the pilot study, I also had a photographic exhibition at a state university art gallery. As previously mentioned, this exhibit was a series of nine still life photographs, which depict my life through compositions of physical artifacts, family snapshots, and other relics gathered over my lifetime.

Thus, as I reflect on the nature of my photographic exhibit in conjunction with encounters of older students and those generational differences with younger students, I think the best place to begin to understand this phenomenon is with myself. I fit into the categorical differentiation that I had established for my quasi-experimental study, plus, I had grown up during a unique historical period and in a region of America that places me as an *insider* within that socio-cultural context. This seems to be an exceptional and interesting combination of factors to research as an autoethnography. Further, in recent years other scholars have published works based on autoethnographic topics ranging from self-identity as a White, the internal creative processes of an artist, and personal transformation (Burke, 2007; Forest, 2007; McCaskill, 2008); thus I am not charting unknown water, but rather, contributing to this particular body of autoethnographic knowledge.

Additionally, as I researched the literature regarding representation and stereotyping in mass media, one of my professors strongly encouraged me to study the works and philosophies of cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) and Black feminist writer, bell hooks (1992) (G. Aiello, personal communication, September 17, 2008). While their work resonated with my particular way of thinking, I realized this might be a generational phenomenon, since both these writers were Baby Boomers as myself. Foucault (1973) has

stated that knowledge and power changes with each generation. This therefore, raised questions in my cognitive processes. Could it be their ways of thinking and arguments are dated? Is their thinking stuck in the era of the *civil rights movement*? How does the current younger generation (Millennials) relate to these notions? Thus, I need to understand myself, as a member of Hall's and hooks' generation and in light of their particular brand of racial theories. Also, I need to understand myself in relation to the cultures I have been exposed to during my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. I have changed over the course of several decades and during this time others have changed as well, thus affecting socio-cultural contexts of understanding between different generations, not unlike those experienced by Geertz (1995). Maybe time has arrived to take a fresh look at theories and notions of representation and racial stereotyping in visual images and how different generations of individuals correspondingly interpret them and make meaning in their personal lives from these visual encounters.

Over a period of several months, I have reflected on this notion of generational changes and its concomitant socio-cultural affects and I recently encountered a statement in the literature by Cahnmann (2003) that precisely expresses my thoughts in these regards: "The available traditions for analysis and write up of research are not fixed entities, but a dynamic enterprise that changes within and among generations of scholars and from audience to audience" (p. 35). Scholars' research changes and audiences' attitudes and responses to that research change over time; life is not static, but rather, it is in flux, changing generationally.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Framing My Literature Approach

In my introductory chapter, I proposed this dissertation would be about the construction of self-identity. As an interdisciplinary academic, my approach to the literature may at first seem disparate, disjointed; the “cobbling together,” as Biklen and Casella (2007, p. 63) said regarding those who produce interdisciplinary work. Thus, I will approach the literature thematically, addressing areas brought forth in the first chapter: self-identity, photographs, visual semiotics, and representation. Within these broad themes, I will also address applicable sub-themes. Additionally, in this chapter, I will review literature for developing appropriate theoretical frameworks for this study.

While writing about educational research, Creswell (2005) discussed how the literature review section of qualitative studies track differently from their quantitative counterparts in that, typically it plays a lesser role at the beginning of a study. Instead, the researcher incorporates it in the discussion of findings as a method of contrast. Additionally, he noted this is done to allow emergent views of study participants to develop without imposed constraints by the literature. Further, Biklen and Casella (2007) suggested that literature reviews might differ from the proposal stage to the final write-up due to emerging changes of direction often encountered in qualitative studies. However, they noted the length of the literature review is dependent upon the researcher’s ability to frame the dissertation to ensure stability. Since my autoethnography is not dependent on participants beyond myself, I confidently approach my proposed framework.

Self-Identity

Identity takes many different forms, such as gender, racial, religious, cultural, or occupational. As such, there are numerous avenues for exploring the concept of identity, both personal and social. Certainly identity can be investigated psychoanalytically and theorized into taxonomies with stages known as “psychosocial crises” (Erikson, 1959, p. 119). Similarly, identity exploration can narrowly focus on specific life stages like adolescents (Marcia, 1980) or possibly Black or White racial identity (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990, 1995). However, for my purposes in this study, I will focus on identity construction through objects and artifacts, including photographs, and as it relates temporally and geographically through narrative. The reason for doing so is because of the complexity contained within the data. Each photograph that comprises the *Wunderkammer* series functions at differing levels: First, there are the physical objects, which constitute the visual content contained within the photographic frame; second, among these physical artifacts are photographs, both family snapshots and professional images; third, there is the photograph itself, which visually contains representations of the aforementioned items, that is, photographs within photographs; and fourth, there is the implicit temporal and geographical abstraction bound within each of the nine *Wunderkammers* as they depict my journey and transition through life. Therefore in this literature review, I have chosen diverse material as they relate to these salient points, in an effort explicate the imbricated complexity of my life’s journey.

Objects, Artifacts, and Photographs

During the mid-1970s, the connection between human identity and mundane household objects became the center research attention for social scientists Csikszentmi-

halyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981). Accordingly, their view of material objects was not that of simple tools used in everyday life, but rather, how these objects functioned as a framework of sorts for a person's existential being. In doing so, personal objects or material artifacts, aid in development of self: "Things contribute to the cultivation of the self when they help create order in consciousness at the levels of the person, community, and patterns of natural order" (p. 16). Thus, in their estimation, objects people gather and surround themselves with are not neutral in one's identity evolution. Rather, they function in negative or positive ways in one's development, "it either helps the forces of chaos that make life random and disorganized or it helps to give purpose and direction to one's life" (p. 17).

Based on Rochberg-Halton's (1979; see also Rochberg-Halton, 1984) dissertation research conducted in Chicago, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) expanded the study and chose not to deal with objects encountered in public environments, such as cars or occupational tools, which also define one's identity. Rather, they examined individuals' interactions with personal artifacts within the bounds of the home, items people would have control over their usage and existence within the household. Their sample for this study consisted of 82 families from the Chicago suburbs and comprised stratified age differentiation of three generations, equally mixed between upper- and lower-middle classes. To further delineate their sample, 79 respondents were of the youngest generation, 150 of the middle, and 86 were of the oldest generation. When considering gender, their participants were reported as 44% male with the remaining 56% as female. Nearly 1700 artifacts were mentioned as being special by respondents during their surveys, which was roughly five objects per person. From this massive amount of data, the re-

searchers identified ten objects as being special: furniture, visual arts, photographs, books, stereos, musical instruments, television (and TV viewing), sculptures, plants, and plates. The notion of photographs holding a special place within the household and the cultivation of self-identity is important for my research, therefore I will turn specifically to this portion of their study.

While Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) did not explicate the type of photographs under consideration in their study, one can infer these photographs were family snapshots and/or consumer portraits, and not professionally crafted commercial media images since they functioned primarily as collective and individual memory keepers. Specifically, photographs related to survey categories of *memory* and *immediate family*. Respondents placed photographs in high regard with 27% *cherishing* photos as memories, while 26% referred to them as representative of immediate family. Of all categories under investigation in their study, “no other object had such a high proportion of reasons in these two categories. Obviously, photographs are the prime vehicles for preserving the memory of one’s close relations” (p. 67). This aspect also was reflected generationally with only 10% of children’s attachment to photos, while their parents were 22% and their grandparents at 37% ($p < .0002$). People in this survey held photographs emotionally, with ties to deceased immediate family members and these photographs contributed to a “sense of personal continuity” (p. 68). This was an important finding, in that numerous global cultures ritualize the memory of ancestors in various forms. The researchers thus concluded the importance of family photos, “[m]ore than any other object in the home, photos serves the purpose of preserving the memory of personal ties. In their ability to arouse emotion there is no other type of object that can surpass them” (p.

69). These important findings about the usage of photographs in one's self-identity became important underpinnings for future research surrounding personal snapshots and identity (e.g., Hurdley, 2006; Kroger & Adair, 2008).

Displayed Objects

Building in part on Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981) earlier work while focusing within British domestic culture, Hurdley (2006) investigated displayed objects within the home environment in order to understand the how and why of such domestic practices. Her approach was to interview participants in their homes and then she conducted autobiographical analyses of their storytelling narratives. In regards to identity development, she noted, "the analysis of biographical and autobiographical materials—spoken and written—provides a valuable resource in the exploration of moral careers and transformations in identity" (p. 719). Thus, in her study of the 140 questionnaire respondents, she interviewed 30 individuals and their families in Cardiff, Wales, who had fireplaces and mantelpieces as focal points in their living rooms. Although respondents discussed other areas of their homes as focal points, Hurdley's concern was on the "display of material culture on domestic mantelpieces" (p. 720). The importance of these particular domestic sites within the home was because this is "where family and individual stories were constructed around individual objects and assemblages of photographs and collections of artefacts [*sic*]" (p. 720). She considered this ritualized site to be where meaning was constructed and "what gives home its meaning" (p. 723).

After analyzing several narrative transcripts, Hurdley (2006) concluded from her micro-study, that peoples' storytelling about domestic artifacts and photographs aided their construction of self as the personal and social intersected one another. Within the

range of cultural norms, these displayed objects were imbued with moral attributes. Further, she noted respondents' stories about objects were in essence stories about themselves, "as moral beings with histories and beliefs, who are both socialized and individuated" (p. 729). Some individuals' identities may not readily be apparent and she felt their story narrations about the displayed objects and photos, therefore, provided a mechanism for people to account for these latent identities. Hurdley went on to conclude that her empirical study showed how individuals not only produced cultural displays, they also co-constructed meaning for their lives through these displays, thus they were producers and not simply consumers of personal culture. Not only is it important to understand how individuals produce identity through their personal objects, understanding the inherent value ascribed to those objects at later life-stages is important. This became the point of focus for researchers on the opposite side of the globe in New Zealand, as I explain in the following section.

Objects in Identity Transitions

Personal objects maintain intrinsic value and may prove important as identity factors. This may be more significant for individuals experiencing stages of key life transitions according to researchers Kroger and Adair (2008). They noted most identity development theories "press for an initial resolution during late adolescence" (p. 6); some theorists, such as Erikson (1959) insisted ongoing stages of identity development could progress well into late adulthood. As such, Kroger and Adair conducted a qualitative exploration with 20 older (aged 65 to 89) adults living in New Zealand, in order to examine how valued possessions or objects were assigned symbolic meanings and how they functioned in late-stage identity development. They explicitly avoided utilitarian objects and

focused on physical objects that held special meaning (i.e., *cherished, treasured, or valued objects/possessions*) to its owner.

In previous research, Kroger (2002) examined identity maintenance and revision processes in older adults and how they would be involved in creative projects as a means of “tying up the package of a lifetime” (p. 91). Often this included the photographs of self and family, along with significant life event memorabilia. Several years after Kroger’s study, Kroger and Adair (2008) described this phenomenon of identity maintenance as a method to “bring important identity elements together into one physical ‘package’ (often through a collage or scrapbook of photographs, newspaper clippings, or a book or diary of memoirs), and maintain a predictable, daily life structure” (p. 7). Using grounded theory methods, they explored symbolic meanings generated through these special and personal objects.

The use of photographs rose to the top as being the most common symbolic link for older adults in their identity maintenance efforts (Kroger & Adair, 2008). These findings indicated the importance of photographs, whether formal portraits or family snapshots, as being links for those individuals to their cherished relationships with family members. Photographs also played an important role in family continuity by helping the informant maintain their personal identity and linkage across familial generations, both past and future. Additionally, collections of valued objects such as family jewelry, china or paintings, along with photographs, symbolized one’s life journey by depicting important events. Photographs and photographic albums for instance, provided a visible link, which depicted life phases and provided “the means by which participants found a sense of identity and pleasure in their own life histories” (p. 18). Therefore, cherished posses-

sions in the forms of personal objects and specifically photographs, contributed significantly to older adults' sense of self identity as "these objects were concrete, physical reminders of who the participant was, who he or she is now, and how he or she is connected across time and place to present, past, and future generations and eras" (p. 23). Rochberg-Halton (1984) summarized this connection perfectly, "Transactions with one's cherished possessions either actually or symbolically thus can be seen as sign expressions of the self" (p. 364).

Thus far I have reviewed literature that addresses domestic photographs among objects and artifacts people use to create and maintain their sense of self-identity. Next, I will address photographs formally as individual units of artistic expression and visually mediated communication and their impact on American mass culture during the era of my childhood in the 1950s and 1960s. This will include explication of domestic photography within the American social visual milieu.

Photographs

Photography is a multi-disciplinary endeavor. As such, it spans both the arts and the sciences (Barrett, 2006; Hirsch, 2009). This means photographs can be approached a number of ways, but first, I will review a typology of images designed for ways of thinking about and interpreting them. This typology is applicable to all forms of photographs whether they are commercial, art, domestic snapshots, or gallery prints. In his discussion of criticizing photographs, Barrett (2006) suggested six different categories in which images can be placed: (1) *descriptive*, (2) *explanatory*, (3) *interpretive*, (4) *ethically evaluative*, (5) *aesthetically evaluative*, and (6) *theoretical*. Within his discussion on these ty-

pologies, he stressed how images could fit into more than one category, and on the other hand, numerous categories might pertain to an individual photograph.

Descriptive photographs encompass nearly all photographs, in that some form of visual information emanates from them. These types of images function at the indexical level (Tagg, 1988) and would include such images as identification photos for one's drivers license and passport, or medical photos and X-rays, or surveillance images taken of passengers at international airports. Descriptive photographs function within the positivistic realm for the most part, although, Barrett did claim however, "some photographers make descriptive photographs as art" (p. 66).

Explanatory photographs on the other hand, are sometimes hard to differentiate from the *descriptive*, but there is enough differentiation to warrant separate types. These images explain the *how* within the image frame, such as the famous series made in 1880 of a horse's galloping gait, by Eadweard Muybridge. Other examples of explanatory photography would be those used by social scientists within the areas of visual sociology or anthropology (e.g., Banks, 2007, Stanczak, 2007) or the applied use of photography in cultural studies known as visual ethnography (Pink, 2007). Outside of academia, press photographs for the most part, used in photojournalism, would be typed in this category. The genre of documentary photography would fit here as well. But the defining criteria for Barrett is the photograph's veracity, accordingly, he stated, "To be accurately placed in this category, a photograph should provide visual explanations that are in principle verifiable on scientific grounds" (p. 75). Thus, these first two categories could be semiotically classified under Barthes' (1977) notion of *denotation*, while the remaining four

categories, I would place into his *connotative* classification, which I will explicate later in this chapter.

Photographs created to be self-expressive reveal much about the photographer's working paradigm, according to Barrett (2006) and are what he called *interpretive* photographs. Here, the images are not necessarily attempting scientific accuracy, but rather "a variety of readings" (p. 83). Additionally, interpretive photographs are typically *made* as opposed to *taking* or *snapping*, as it were. Oftentimes interpretive photographs are crafted within the confines of the studio and not out in an open world environment. In other words, the photographer exercises complete control over the content and construction of these images. For example, the photographs that comprise my *Wunderkammer* series fit well in this typology, since I crafted them in the studio with full control over the content and composition. Other well-known works in this genre comes to mind, such as *Jerry Uelsmann's* darkroom multiple exposures or *Emmet Gowin's* guided family studies.

Ethically evaluative photographs however, may lend themselves to scientific explanations or personal interpretations and offer ethical judgments. *W. Eugene Smith's* photographic commentary, *Minamata*, on Japanese mercury poisoning of village fishermen and farmers exemplifies this category. Other well know photographers such as *Jacob Riis* of the 19th century child labor abuses or *Dorothea Lang's* Great Depression era Farm Security Administration (FSA) documentation, are other exemplars. Ideological issues come to play in this category and they may take the form of imagery created by photographic artists or they may be generically produced for mass consumption within mass media such as advertising.

Aesthetically evaluative photographs, according to Barrett (2006), bypass judgments on social issues and focus instead on aesthetic dimensions. Within popular thought, this category is what most people would define as *art photography*. These photographs are about beauty, both of the content being rendered and the final form of the photograph itself. Although Barrett claimed the subject matter is infinite, most people think of three conspicuous genres, “the nude, the landscape, and the still life” (p. 91). Immediately, photographic masters from the modernistic era come to mind: *Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Irving Penn, Imogen Cunningham, or Paul Caponigro*.

The last category in Barrett’s typology is *theoretical* photographs. I would characterize this as *meta-photography*, in other words, “photographs about photography.” As he aptly described, “These photographs comment on issues about art and art making, about the politics of art, about modes of representation, and other theoretical issues about photography and photographing” (p. 100). Examples from this genre would include *Cindy Sherman’s* self-portraits as parody from other media, or, *Joel-Peter Witkin’s* macabre images of cadavers and body parts arranged after famous paintings from previous centuries. These types of photographs function as a form of visual criticism using the image instead of words, according to Barrett.

Since a portion of my *Wunderkammer* project includes family, or *domestic*, snapshots as evidentiary artifacts, in the next section I turn to Holland (1991), who argued their interpretation could be contingent: “But interpreting family pictures poses a series of challenges to different pasts, as memory interweaves with private fantasy and public history” (p. 1). However, memories, when used for both snapshot analysis and in the use of headnotes (Ottenburg, 1990), takes on primacy and legitimacy making them more impor-

tant than field notes, according to Wall (2008), who also argued they “are more reliable than field notes or other written records of the field” (p. 45; also see Ottenberg, 1990).

Domestic Snapshots

One area of photography of particular interest in my research is that of *personal* or *family snapshots*, which oftentimes could be categorized as *descriptive* in Barrett’s (2006) typology. As I stated in my introductory remarks, family snapshots play an important role in autoethnographies by providing a form of validity, which substantiates through visual documentation the existence of a particular moment in one’s personal history. Based on photography’s pre-established regime of truth advocated through positivistic assumptions, known as the “myth of *photographic truth*” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 17, emphasis in original), family snapshots for many individuals establishes reality and existence of familial moments. Sturken and Cartwright argued, “A photograph in a family album is often perceived to tell the truth, such as the fact that a particular family gathering took place, a vacation was taken, or a birthday was celebrated” (p. 17). Therefore, a brief discussion about the snapshot is needed to frame its usage and interpretation within my *Wunderkammer* project.

The advent of snapshot photography had its roots enmeshed with professional photographic usage in advertising. This symbiotic relationship dates to the late nineteenth century when George Eastman introduced his mass consumer hand-held camera, the *Box Brownie* (Holland, 2004). This simple little box camera moved photography from the mysterious realm of the professional photographer’s studio and darkroom, to that of the family snaphooter. It was soon to become a great American diversion and as Hope (2008) noted, “The practice of translating experience into instant memories was enhanced

by snapshot photography as an amateur pastime” (p. 316). However, as Holland argued, this new technology for the snapshooting graze was biased; it was gendered. Beginning with Kodak’s advertising campaign in 1893, the notion of family snapshots fell within the feminine realm. Their *Kodak girl* was introduced during these advertisements and she persisted as a popular icon well into the 20th century. Holland noted that by the 1920s, Kodak had feminized their snapshot cameras by introducing them with fashion colors of “pinks, blues and greens—and ‘Vanity Kodaks’ came with a matching lipstick, mirror and compact holder” (p. 142). Additionally, by the 1950s, Kodak had an established hierarchy of who was snapping what within the family photographic experience. According to Nordstrom (2004), this hierarchy insisted that “men photograph women, women photograph children, children photograph other children, and everybody photographs a scenic view” (p. 7). However, as Holland reiterated, the family snaphooter was “likely to be a woman, interested in ‘home portraits’, records of family life and much else besides” (p. 115).

Family snapshots, or *domestic photography* (Spence & Holland, 1991), occupy an important role within the overall matrix of photography. For some people, snapshots provide glimpses into a past or forgotten family history and aid one’s memory about things long faded (Seabrook, 1991). While for others, the photo-collections of past family remembrances function as a continuity of life, as when elderly family members pass on their boxes of snapshots to younger generations. They function as surrogates of their former selves, as Seabrook illustrated from an interview with a ninety-year-old lady:

These pictures are the proof that I did it. I don't want them to fall into the hands of strangers, people who'd just think it was a pile of rubbish and throw it out with the rest of my bits and pieces. My life is in that box. (p. 179)

This elderly lady saw her personal identity within the box of snapshots and this is critical according to Holland (1991) when she argued family snapshots become “the powerful claims made by family ties [and] offer a structured framework to our sense of identity and community” (p. 1). She further explicated the dual role of snapshots interweaving personal identity with the social and how the “social influences the personal” (p. 3).

Although the visual narrative embodied within these private collections of images tell personal stories of identity, simultaneously, they reflect the social influences of any given generation: “the personal histories they record belong to narratives on a wider scale, those public narratives of community, religion, ethnicity, and nation which make private identity possible” (Holland, 1991, p. 3). Domestic photography therefore, serves important roles for many individuals and family groups as forms of remembrances, shrines to the collective family unit (Seabrook, 1991), and identity construction that is both personal and social. Yet, all the while as amateur photographers created their domestic snapshots, they were unwittingly being influenced in their ways of seeing the world about them through commercially crafted photographs via substantial organizational entities conveying underlying ideological agendas that proclaimed a unique American normality. As part of the masses of post-war Americans seeking to fulfill their idea-tion of the *American Dream* during the 1950s, my parents succumbed to those visual notions promulgated by those ideological institutions and thus, I draw attention to these factors in the upcoming section.

Ways of Viewing Images

Visual images, and particularly photographic images, take a central role in contemporaneous American society. Lutz and Collins (1993), in their probe into imagery usage and interpretation in the *National Geographic* magazine, noted, “the photograph as a central feature of contemporary life” (p. 4). Therefore it is important to look at different photographic usages over the succeeding decades since photography’s introduction to Western society in 1839. When Daguerre (Hirsch, 2009) introduced his remarkable photographic process in Paris, he did so at what might be considered the height of the positivistic era, couched within rising modernism and the industrial age. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) observed photography’s European unveiling in the early nineteenth century corresponded “when concepts of *positivist* science held sway” (p. 16, emphasis in original). As such, the camera and its associated photographs were rendered with a mechanical device, which afforded viewers the appearance of truth; scientific representations of reality. This viewpoint did not take long to imbricate itself into American thinking. For example, only seven years after Daguerre announced his daguerreotype process of image making in Paris, its representation of reality was firmly fixated in American minds. One of these American minds was Bostonian Francis Parkman (1846/2002), who pinned these thoughts in his travel diary while surveying the American West in 1846:

An antelope or a deer usually swung from a bough, and haunches were suspended against the trunk. That camp is *daguerreotyped* on my memory: the old tree, the white tent, with Shaw sleeping in the shadow of it, and Reynal’s miserable lodge close by the bank of the stream. (p. 119, emphasis added)

Thus, the camera and its associated photograph, when placed within the “context of positivism,” according to Sturken and Cartwright, we find the “the photographic camera was

taken to be a scientific tool for registering reality” (p. 17). Thus, the camera became an important tool for both personal imagery and for mass media and how it rendered images to a mass viewing audience.

During the ensuing years after photography’s introduction and given its status as science by the late nineteenth century, photography had become well established as a form of surveillance on society. While reviewing institutional uses, Tagg (1988) stated, “The coupling of evidence and photography in the second half of the nineteenth century was bound up with the emergence of new institutions and new practices of observation and record-keeping” (p. 5). This new technology fared well as Western society was re-structured from agrarian societies into national states of industrialization and the “development of a network of disciplinary institutions—the police, prisons, asylums, hospitals, departments of public health, schools, and even the modern factory system itself” (p. 5). It is from this early positivistic application of photography, that a common colloquialism arose, “photographs never lie.” Therefore, photography and its variant forms of visual media set precedence for how Americans would be guided to understand visual images over succeeding generations.

Society in contemporary America revolves around a popular culture based on photographic images, whether they are still or moving images. This image-based culture (Jhally, 2003) thrives within the visual media, including documentary magazines and advertising. Of concern in this paper is the notion of photographic influence in the construction of social and personal identity during the 1950s and 1960s, which through advertisements such as Kodak’s *Colorama*, contributed to our nation’s collective impressions of social structure as constructed in America and how we as a culture conceive the notion

of the “good life” (p. 251) as being a normal White middle-class construct. In the succeeding sections I will explicate further how this view of photographs held sway over the American mass populace. Two institutions were important in disseminating their ideologies of science, race and gender: *National Geographic* magazine and Kodak’s *Colorama* advertisements.

Reading the National Geographic

Not surprisingly, as the popularity of positivism reached its zenith during the late nineteenth century, along with its full impact “as an intellectual development” (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 19) in America, the quasi-scientific and educational magazine *National Geographic* made its debut. This soon to be popular magazine was the official organ of the National Geographic Society, which was established in 1888 by one of Boston’s elite socialites, Gardiner G. Hubbard, lawyer and patron of science (p. 20). Additionally, the society’s board members and founders were upper-class White males that “belonged to the traditional elite” (p. 20). Thus, for more than 120 years and especially during the organization’s formative years, this quasi-scientific society has influenced the perceptions of representation through visual images for thousands of American readers in regards to understanding *Otherness* as solely “filtered through Anglo eyes” (Wilson, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003, p. 284). As Lutz and Collins argued, the “*National Geographic* magazine has come to be one of the primary means by which people in the United States receive information and images of the world outside their own borders” (p. 1). Additionally, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) noted the *National Geographic*’s cameras created a *gaze* toward the *Other* (Clark & O’Donnel, 1999; Hirsch, 2009; Tatum, 2000; also see Anderson & Middleton, 2005) and set up binary oppositions between “civilization/nature,

white/other, and male/female” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 102) thus establishing a taxonomy of normal versus exotic Other. In essence therefore, “the photograph is thus a central tool in establishing difference” (p. 103). However, these binary oppositions were not limited to the Other beyond U.S. borders, as Lutz and Collins stated, this external world view became internalized within America’s dominant social order in its collective ideological view of Otherness within its borders; in other words, how Whites viewed Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, or Native Americans.

In trying to understand the full impact of the *National Geographic* on visual perceptions of Otherness by *normal* Americans, Lutz and Collins (1993) worked from a critical theory stance and conducted a combined-method study, which used an extensive content analysis coupled with in-depth interviews with primary actors as well as audience members. They noted the most revealing scholarly work on the relationship between images and society occurred in two distinct visual mass media arenas: advertising and documentary photography. It was the former where Kodak’s *Colorama* rose to the forefront in domestic photography, while the latter genre was where the *National Geographic* asserted itself with its use of visually enticing photographic imagery. Ergo, documentary photography personified institutional notions of an objective, positivistic reality. Thus, the researchers chose this particular periodical realizing it does not stand alone in forming dominant ideological thought, but rather one of a “complex system of artifacts and communication devices” (p. xxi), which included visual mass media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, television news and documentary programs, motion pictures, museums, and educational institute artifacts such as international student exchange programs or world history textbooks.

Prior to World War II (WW II), the *National Geographic's* photographs were primarily contributed by a limited number of authors, which were predominantly White, upper-middle-class anthropologists. This group of images before the war reflected both individual and institutional behavior. After WW II, the magazine in an effort to compete with contemporary picture magazines such as *Life* and *Look*, incorporated contributions from many photographers and writers in each issue, yet the content still reflected the ideological precedent established by the former White male elites of the society's upper echelon. When Lutz and Collins (1993) analyzed the 594 photographs in their study, this was revealed through specific patterns within the *National Geographic's* rendering of non-Euro Americans. Specifically, people from "the third and fourth worlds" (p. 89) were depicted in four distinctive ways: (1) portrayed as *exotic*, (2) they were *idealized*, (3) they were *naturalized* and "taken out of all but a single historical narrative" (p. 89), and (4) they were *sexualized*.

In regards to their concern for the social construction of racial and cultural difference between the *National Geographic* and its readers, Lutz and Collins (1993) noted a lack of ideological readings in their informants' interpretations of the imagery. They proffered this was due to "a fact that may be related to the cultural construction of the genre of documentary photography or to more general tendencies, in the white middle class at least, to accept authoritative discourse at some level" (p. 269). Compounding this particular aspect, they suggested that most Americans "are not schooled in the skills of critical photographic reading" (i.e., visual literacy; p. 269) and therefore, tended to view or treat the photograph as an objective scientific document or artifact. Thus, as they rightly argued, "photos in a scientific journal are not likely to lead readers to ask about

their producers' intentions or their ideological resonances" (p. 269). In other words, documentary photography held a privileged status for Americans and was something not to be questioned.

Lutz and Collins (1993) have shown a social interaction and a perceived reality construction between a century's old quasi-scientific educational organization and its American readership. In doing so, these two researchers have illustrated a particular agenda set by and designed by dominant middle- and upper-class White males, who advanced their particular scientific and gender/racist ideology to a popular mass societal strata that did not have critical skills for understanding or reading the ideological connotations implicit in their photographic images. While the *National Geographic's* photographic style incorporated humanistic and realistic elements, their images were elevated to the status of documentary, which in American popular culture, according to Lutz and Collins, was revered as "a particularly reliable basis of knowledge" (p. 271). Consequently, while images may be read in their "historical context, and in eras of racial and cultural tension" (p. 278), they may have contributed unwittingly to many Americans' covert and overt racial attitudes towards people of color, both within and without U.S. borders. As these researchers noted, "When these images have been broadcast through the mass media, they become points of reference for the culture at large" (p. 278). These notions link back implicitly to the impact of Kodak's advertising family snapshot photography, as well as their 40-year running of the *Colorama* and its national influence on social and personal identity and the concept of what constituted being *normal* for many Americans.

Kodak's Influence and its *Colorama*

In the previous section, I explained specifically how Lutz and Collins (1993) focused their attention on *documentary* photography's impact on mass mediated visual communication via the *National Geographic* journal's notion of American normality. The opposite side to their inquiry however, was the role of *advertising* photography and its affect on social and personal identity construction of normality. In this section I will tightly focus on a singular aspect of Eastman Kodak's advertising as it worked seamlessly and in conjunction with the *National Geographic's* popular rendering of the way images were viewed during the Cold War era. Falling within the same general timeframe as Lutz and Collins' study, Kodak embarked on a 40-year advertising campaign from 1950 until 1990, which revolved around the world's largest photographs. These images were part of Kodak's *Colorama* display at Grand Central Terminal in the heart of New York City (Hope, 2008; Nordstrom & Roalf, 2004) and their influence was felt on visual mass media generally, but specifically, in domestic snapshot photographic practices.

Beginning in 1950 and continuously running for the next forty years, Kodak displayed 565 backlit transparent color photographs measuring 18-feet by 60-feet on Grand Central Terminal's east wall and was called a *Colorama*. According to Nordstrom (2004), these giant advertisement images also became known as "The World's Largest Photographs" (p. 5). Kodak's primary goal with the *Colorama* was to promote color photography first, and sell "film and cameras secondarily" (Hope, 2008, p. 317). During the four-decade display of the *Colorama*, two primary forms of imagery were shown: (1) snapshot advertising photos, which "depicted middle-class families in the act of making snapshots together" (Hope, p. 315) during the 1950s and into the mid-1970s; and (2) color specta-

cles of natural beauty around the world, which were professionally crafted images reminiscent of *National Geographic* imagery and these appeared primarily during the latter years of the display. The former group of images is of concern in my writing in this section: snapshot advertising photographs.

Kodak aggressively pursued the consumer market by gender and racial targeting; white women were the keepers of the domestic snapshot photograph. The themes portrayed in the *Colorama* advanced this notion, yet simultaneously, Kodak established hierarchical practices (Nordstrom, 2004) as previously noted. Interestingly, these visual practices, as displayed and reinforced through the *Colorama*, were observed primarily by business men commuting from and back to the suburbs as they entered daily into New York City for capitalistic commerce exchanges. Thus, these “men in their gray flannel suits streaming in from the suburbs” (p. 5) disembarked from their trains and making their way through the cavernous terminal, became the front-line viewers of Kodak’s racially gendered advertising messages on display in the *Colorama*. In turn, these white middle-class men returned to the suburbs, bringing with them notions of *normal* American life as projected through the *Colorama* and provided family guidance in this great amateur pastime. According to Hope (2008), this notion of normality “displayed images of what the proper family should look like” (p. 319). She argued this fit well into Kodak’s advertising strategy and that its “vision of its target market was racially and sexually biased” (p. 317). Further, she insisted, “Families were white and young, headed by men, depicted as groups of attractive heterosexual couples, babies, children, teenagers, and grandparents, and staged in scenes where ‘nothing but blue skies’ provided locations for ‘dreaming in color’” (p. 317). Additionally, while analyzing the visual rhetoric of the

Colorama, Hope (2008) commented on the merging of advertising and domestic photography as being central to a popular cultural habit of image consumption. These larger-than-life photographs taught Americans an underlying ideology of consumerism and, again, notions of a *normal* White nuclear family, so popular during the 1950s and 1960s. Hope argued, “Kodak advertised a fantasy world in which the ritual of making color photographs coincidentally highlighted material consumption as a domestic value.” She continued, “The Colorama punctuated the national ethic with images that valorized and conjoined affluence and the nuclear family as twin standards for a new U.S. culture” (p. 314).

Thus, while Kodak attempted to dominate the domestic photographic market by selling color photography, along with cameras and film needed for that activity, they also caused considerable impact upon the collective American conscience. Whether intentional or not, they contributed to ideological stances of racism, sexism, and popular consumerism within the United States during critical historical moments of the preceding century. I would suggest that Kodak and *National Geographic* had direct influences on my family’s perception of normality and my parents followed their lead in how they created domestic snapshots of our normal family. Further, I would argue my subsequent childhood notions of being a White American growing up in the South were implicitly premised on these institutional ideologies. When I viewed many of these giant mural advertisements (Kodak, 2010), I see my own family as we portrayed ourselves in snapshots during those decades. My parents read popular, mass-market magazines of national circulation, which reflected advertising trends established in New York, home of the 40-year *Colorama* campaign, and were influenced by them. This same notion is reported by

Heath (1983) when she discussed how Whites of the Piedmont area in the Carolina states were influenced by images they saw from the “public media” during the 1960s and 1970s.

The Kodak ads emphasized the nuclear family as participants in the ritualization of family memorialization and consumerism through the family snapshot. This was easily accomplished during the post-war era of the 1950s/60s and the ubiquitous nature of American advertising in mass media. Specifically, these ads by Kodak were targeted to a burgeoning middle-class of Caucasians and were depicted in a hierarchical and patriarchal fashion. For nearly the first 25 years of this lengthy ad series, the active participants were only Whites. People of color, notably Blacks, were not active participants. When *Others* were shown, such as Native Americans or Asians, they were exclusively depicted as *exotic* and the focus of the White participants’ camera gaze. This is reminiscent of *National Geographic’s* gaze upon the other as exotic as well. Lutz and Collins (1993) bear this out well in their study. Similarly, in an old family heirloom book recently discovered after my father’s passing, *America’s Wonderlands: The scenic national parks and monuments of the United States* (Severy, 1959/1966), portrays “normal” American life in similar fashion as its parent journal, *National Geographic*, and Kodak’s *Colorama*. The vast majority of images containing human participants are White, relegating people of color as exotic objects for the White person’s gaze. There are a few rare instances where some people of color appear as tourist along side Whites, but this is by far the exception.

In this section I have reviewed appropriate literature that illustrates how objects, artifacts, and photographs work in concert with personal self-identity development. Research conducted by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) has shown varying

levels and usages of possessions among different family generations and their perceptions of these artifacts as they related to their identity. One of the strongest possessions in this regard was the photograph, especially among older individuals. The use of photographs to aid personal memory and as objective documentation of who they were and what they did, personified the identities for many individuals in various Western societies (Hurdley, 2006; Kroger, 2002; Kroger & Adair, 2008; Rochberg-Halton, 1979, 1984).

The nature of photographs (Barrett, 2006) therefore, needed further explication from a formal perspective to show how they function on numerous cognitive levels. One level of importance within my research is the domestic snapshot, since several appear within my *Wunderkammer* series. I have explicated Kodak's role in creating the great American pastime of amateur domestic photography (Holland, 2004) and how it occupied an important role in the overall matrix of photography in general, and specifically in the role of self-identity (Holland, 1991, 2004; Seabrook, 1991; Spence & Holland, 1991).

Moving from the personal use of domestic photographs in self-identity construction among individuals, I refocused my literature review to investigate photography's role from an institutional ideological perspective. Here I investigated two very specific instances where photography's culpability through ideology contributed to mass society's perceptions of American normality during the mid-20th century. The visual media contributing to this cultural phenomenon were the *National Geographic* (Lutz & Collins, 1993) and the world's largest advertisement known as Kodak's *Colorama* (Hope, 2008; Nordstrom & Roalf, 2004). After moving from photography's social and personal roles in identity construction, I will now investigate the theoretical framework for my research,

which includes visual literacy, visual semiotics, and representational underpinnings within historical moments.

Theoretical Framework

The overarching framework for how I view personal and mass mediated photographs when subjected to critical visual methodology (Rose, 2007) consists of two essential components, visual literacy and visual semiotics. These two elements interact with one another in an imbricated fashion and are key aspects in my view of Rose's methodological theory, which I explain in my methods chapter. Additionally, within the visual semiotic section I will expand my discussion to include Hall's (1997) theory of representation, along with Foucault's (1973) notion of historical moments and episteme, in order to view the structures of my overall theoretical framework.

Visual Literacy

Photographic images constitute an ever-present visual spectacle in contemporary American society. The impact images have in our society is remarkable and contributes daily to our interactions with fellow citizens. The prominence that images play in modern-day life was important to Manghani, Piper, and Simons (2006) who noted: "Today images seem to inhabit every part of our lives, and everything seems to be or have an image" (p. 1). Looking deeper into this phenomenon, Jhally (2003) explained that our image-based culture thrives within visual mass media and especially within the media of advertising. For example, the medium of print advertising (newspapers, magazines, and collateral materials) publishes impressions everyday of an American social structure by using visual rhetoric to persuade viewers with its underlying ideologies of consumerism and racism. He further noted this construct helped define notions of normality and what

constituted the so-called “good life” (p. 251). Jhally explained how during the 1920s, the United States had become an “image-saturated society” (p. 250), necessitating an overall visual literacy education of the mass consumer public regarding how to “read the commercial messages” (p. 250) depicted within printed advertisements. However, providing this visual literacy education was none other than the mass media institution of advertising, complete with its dominant societal ideologies regarding the “good life” and racial representation. “The advertising industry had to educate as well as sell” (p. 250), he stated. The resultant impact of advertising’s visual depiction of American society and its concomitant representation was presented with a white male, middle-class bias, along with attending dominant ideologies.

By the late 20th century however, many educators sought to bring visual literacy as a sub-component of media literacy into the classroom. For example, Burton (2005) discussed how improvements in media literacy in Australian elementary and secondary schools should include the visual as one of its components. At the college level, Dufflemeyer (2004) on the other hand, conducted visual literacy experiments to determine university students’ levels of understanding regarding visual media’s role in globalization. So initially visual literacy may have been the domain of ideologically driven advertising, in more contemporary times however, visual literacy has become an element of discussion from primary school through university.

The term *visual literacy* therefore, appears numerous times in the literature (Abbot & Shaikh, 2005; Burton, 2005; Chauvin, 2003; Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006; Messaris, 1994a; Schamber, 1991). Interestingly, Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan noted in their editorial piece, “digital and *visual literacies* are the next wave of communication

specialization” (¶3). Conversely, when Schamber published her research in 1991, the term visual literacy had been in use more than twenty years within the educational arena (p.17). Therefore, this term has significance and its usage now spans more than three decades. Additionally, Annenberg visual communication scholar Paul Messaris (1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1998) wrote extensively about visual literacy, which included understanding visual literacy as a defense mechanism against digital manipulation of images in media, or more optimistically, as a means for people to “enrich their repertoires of cognitive skills and gain access to powerful new tools of creative thought” (1998, p. 70). Additionally he discussed visual literacy from a cross-cultural perspective within globalization (2001), as well as understanding the semantic and syntactic attributes of visual language in relation to linguistics (1998).

But, Messaris (1994a) was not the only one to address visual literacy. Messages build upon symbolic aspects, which was the focus of visual literacy for Chauvin (2003). On the other hand, Burton (2005) viewed visual literacy as “a fundamental building block of complete media comprehension, making a learner conscious of visual processes and articulate in using them” (p. 95). Nonetheless, for Messaris (1997) visual literacy “refers to the assumption that the ability to recognize the meaning of visual images (both still pictures and movies) is dependent on prior experience (and is therefore roughly analogous to linguistic competence)” (p. 158).

How does one acquire credible visual literacy? First, this form of literacy does not just happen or appear in someone’s literacy repertoire. According to Watkins, Miller, and Brubaker (2004), students and learners must develop these skills and in order to do so, “they must be schooled, just as they are schooled in reading” (p. 24). Schamber (1991)

likened this visual literacy schooling to writing or composing visual messages, which includes conceptual ideation, organization of visual elements and information, and technology usage to manipulate these messages (e.g., cameras or computers). In essence, the student learns the conventions of visual rhetoric (e.g., visual analogy or metaphors). Once a person starts building their visual competency through traditional visual rhetorical conventions, he or she can begin addressing deeper ideological implications with the image. This is accomplished by understanding symbolic or connotative meaning imbedded within the visual image or visual culture (Mitchell, 2002) under interrogation.

Visual Semiotics

Semiotics, or the study of signs (Chandler, 2007) for the purposes of this paper, has its roots in the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916/1959), who focused his writing on how the sign functioned as signifier and signified and how meaning derived therefrom. Nevertheless, meaning between signifier and signified is constructed within a cultural and historical domain, often with ideological overtones imposed by the dominant social group. Saussure's view of the sign as part of a culture's language system was fixed by this particular cultural code (Aiello, 2006). However, as culture and history change or shift temporally, so do the meanings or representations of signs and symbols. Thus, language is dynamic, and as Chandler (2007) argued, "language is seldom treated as a static, closed and stable system which is inherited from preceding generations but as constantly changing" (p. 10). Thus, Saussure's approach to language and meaning are never truly fixed or final, *per se*. Furthermore, as Hall (1997a) noted, "This opens representation to the constant production of new meanings, new interpretations" (p. 32). In other words, representation's changing meaning is circumstantial to its contextual setting

within a given socio-cultural milieu. What is important from this dialectical exchange however is that Saussure's form of semiotics is linked to the social and cultural purviews of society as opposed to rigid structuralism.

During the 20th century, semiotics extended to what is now known as social semiotics (Chandler, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2005). Semioticians have moved beyond the structural conventions of signifiers and signified, and have surveyed its application to social constructs (Aiello, 2006; Chandler, 2007). Furthermore, social semiotics has been extended to visual culture (Barthes, 1972, 1977; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2001), which is of central concern in this paper. Within the realm of visual semiotics, French semiologist Roland Barthes has become the ubiquitous standard for rendering the photograph. Most notably, Barthes constructed the notion of photographic functionality simultaneously on two levels, that of *denotation* and *connotation* (see Aiello, 2006; Hall, 1997; van Leeuwen, 2001). According to van Leeuwen, Barthesian visual semiotics addresses the question of representation. That is, what is the photograph actually representing and how it is represented. Barthes' answer to this question of representation is that the image functions minimally at two levels; of which van Leeuwen described as "layering of meaning" (p. 94) were in:

The first layer is the layer of *denotation*, of 'what, or who, is being depicted here?'. The second layer is the layer of *connotation*, of 'what ideas and values are expressed through what is represented, and through the way in which its is represented?'. (p. 94)

Epistemologically, the first instance of the visual image functions iconically in that "the signifier represents the signified by apparently having a likeness to it" (Rose, 2007, p.

83). However, at the second instance of the photographic image, there is a deeper ontological turn and meanings are revealed at the ideological level, more symbolical, if you will. The layer of connotation therefore, is where racial, gender, and other forms of stereotyping, or representation, happen within visual mass media images. However, ideological connotations are not limited to mass media images. Often, media images become the exemplar for personal image making and understanding, including the family snapshot (Holland, 1991, 2004; Hope, 2008; Murray, 2008). The primacy of understanding the implied ideological message at the connoted level is significant in critical visual analysis.

Representational Underpinnings and Historical Moments

In order to advance my argument in this dissertation, another framework needs to be established to help provide overall guidance and understanding. From a postmodernist perspective that bridges both critical theory and interpretivism paradigms (Willis, 2007), I will define representation and historical moments as viewed by Hall (1997) and Foucault (1973).

Representation and stereotyping. The terms *representation* and *stereotyping* are used interchangeably within the context of this dissertation and they can have varying meanings or interpretations based on factors such as who is using the term or who is hearing and receiving the term. Also, influence on one's understanding of the term can be derived from historical, social, and cultural contexts. Socio-cultural contexts are important issues when attempting to understand representation and stereotyping in visual media and they play a significant role in social sciences, specifically in communication and cultural studies (Cortese, 2008). The opening line in Cortese's work on images of women and mi-

norities in advertising succinctly summarizes this thought from a quote by Stuart Hall, “Reality is never experienced directly but always through the cultural categories made available by a society” (p. 1). These *cultural categories* can be found within the various genres of visual media, such as advertisements, magazines, news, and entertainment. Visual media in general, significantly influence, and in some ways bond diverse groups through a shared experience of popular culture. According to Cortese, this shared experience comprises “...a heterogeneous national and global community. Ethnic groups and social classes of all types share a great deal of common culture through the media” (p. 14).

Even though there may be this shared bond of heterogeneous groups through various media, it does not mean however, that all is right in this highly postmodern visual world. For instance, when considering whether advertisements contain principle or secondary actors from a marginalized group (say African American, Native American, Asian, or Latino), the audience for these visual messages need to be cognizant of who is doing the depicting and setting the agenda within these advertisements. In other words, most advertisements in America today are created by the “dominant producers of mainstream culture—a set of white, male, upper-middle- to upper-class, heterosexual ideologies” (Cortese, 2008, p. 1). Wilson et al. (2003) echoed this sentiment when they stated visual depiction of American society and its associated representation was solely “filtered through Anglo eyes” (p. 284). Additionally, Cortese (2008) noted, “prior to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the mass media world was nearly all white” (p. 91).

Representation or stereotyping is a contributing factor in current and past visual mass media, yet further explication of the terms is needed. For instance, Wilson and Gu-

tierrez (1995) noted *the American Heritage Dictionary* defines stereotyping as “a conventional, formulaic, and usually oversimplified conception, opinion or belief” (p. 61). Additionally, they added that stereotyping within American media, especially entertainment and advertising, are ways of tapping an “audience’s collective consciousness” to quickly “anticipate value system and/or behavioral expectations” (p. 61) and bringing them to the forefront of the audiences’ mind. Simplistically then, stereotypes are “shortcuts to character development and form a basis for mass entertainment and literary fare” (p. 61). Perhaps a more salient and succinct definition of stereotyping can be found in Hoy and Wong’s (2000) statement, “Stereotypes are commonly considered to be generalized beliefs about the characteristics of groups of people” (p. 50).

I would be remiss in this discussion of representation to neglect the thoughts of cultural studies theorist, Stuart Hall (1997) and his anthology, *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. In the introduction to this collection of writings, Hall discussed the *cultural turn* of the late twentieth century and how this *turn* brought about a shift in research focus from looking at culture as simply objects or artifacts (e.g., photographs, paintings, novels, or TV shows) to the construction and exchange of meaning “as a process, a set of *practices*” (p. 2, emphasis in original). Further, he explained that it was not the objects themselves that give meaning, but rather, “it is the participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects and events” (p. 3). In other words, he posited the notion that how people use artifacts or other people for that matter (what we think, feel, or say), forms representation. It is from this *representation* therefore, that we as individuals within a given culture assign meaning to those people, artifacts, or events.

Theories of representation. Hall (1997a) broadly laid out three approaches to explain how representation of meaning works. He framed this within the construct of language, but, with the cultural turn from modernism and structuralism to postmodernism and poststructuralism, the *visual* had taken equal standing (and in some instances, superior standing—*ocularcentrism*⁴) to language in both its verbal and written forms. The three approaches to representation theory that Hall identified were, (1) reflective or mimetic approach, (2) intentional approach, and (3) constructivist approach. In the reflective approach, meaning is placed within the actual person, object, or event, and language therefore, mimics this to “reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world” (p. 24). Conversely, the second approach, functions in an opposite manner. It is through the *intentional* use of language that the speaker or author imposes his or her meaning of representation upon the world. Lastly, the third approach investigates how society constructs meaning through the use of representational systems of concepts and signs. Hall warned that through the constructivist approach, “we must not confuse the *material* world, where things and people exist, and the *symbolic* practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate” (p. 25, emphasis in original). It is this *symbolic* practice that leads to an underpinning paradigm for representation known as semiotics (Chandler, 2007) and its closely allied cousin, social semiotics (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; Rose, 2007).

Semiotics and representation. According to Chandler (2007), semiotics had two co-founders from the early 20th century, one on each side of the Atlantic Ocean; Ameri-

⁴ Banks (2007) defined ocularcentrism as “the apparent privileging of vision above all other senses in contemporary Western society” (p. 14). Further, he explained this privileging was due to post-modern usage of visual images and vision as a way of knowing the world. He attributed this to the increased usage of images in mass media and in part to French sociologist Michel Foucault, who noted, “vision becomes a tool and a means by which power is exercised in society” (p. 14).

can philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce founded *semiotics*, while Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure established the French tradition known as *semiology*. However, today the term semiotics is “used as an umbrella term to embrace the whole field” (p. 3). While a discussion regarding these two fields of study about signs, signification, and symbols is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I reference them as substantive to the discussion at hand. Specifically, from the Saussurean tradition emerged the influential French semiologist Roland Barthes (pronounced Bart), who according to Aiello (2006) was the “first semiologist to look at signs and signification as dynamic elements of any given social and cultural fabric” (p. 6). Further, she noted Saussure’s work was focused on cultural signification as static or *synchronic*; Barthes on the other hand, was “interested in how meanings change across cultural and historical contexts” (p. 6). The semiological stance of Barthes is significant in the development of Hall’s (1997, 1997a, 1997b) theory of representation, especially from an ideological viewpoint. This significance is also important from the standpoint of photography and visual images’ role in personal and mass media representation of the Other. To this end, Aiello (2006) noted that Barthes was interested in two pertinent issues (1) “how meanings change across cultural and historical contexts” (p. 6), and (2) “the role of photography in mass communication” (p. 6).

Barthes (1972, 1977) considered visual images to function at two levels of signification. At their base level, images are simply descriptive of the *analogon*, or analogue, and this level Barthes calls *denotation*. Hall (1997a) explained denotation is “where consensus is wide and most people would agree on the meaning” (p. 38). Aiello (2006) further elaborated that this level “corresponds to the literal meaning of an image, the immediate meaning relating to what is objectively represented the image” (p. 6). In other

words, the image serves as a visual representation, or *simulacrum* (Baudrillard, 1981/1994), of actual reality. However, *connotation* is Barthes' second level, in which semiotics and ideology become the focus of the image. For Hall (1997a) this level addressed "the wider realms of social ideology—the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society" (p. 38). Likewise, Aiello (2006) echoed this concept and further delineated connotation as multiple meanings embedded within socio-cultural codification. Thus, Barthes summarized these two concepts succinctly as "a *denoted* message, which is the *analogon* itself, and the *connoted* message, which is the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it" (1961/1977, p. 17).

Historical Moments and Episteme. Historical moments are defining periods in history, which have significant influence upon society and culture. For instance, some of the broader defining historical moments include "the Renaissance, Enlightenment, Reformation, American and French Revolutions, and the Industrial Revolution" (Allan, 2006, p. 240). More germane to the upcoming discussion of representation in photographic images used in personal photography or visual mass media and their interpretation, are moments such as post-World War II's dominant representational paradigm. Representative of this would be humanistic photography when it gained popularity in France and its interpretation of *Frenchness* (Hamilton, 1997) and included such photographers as *Henri Cartier-Bresson* and *Robert Doisneau*. Other recent moments or historical eras that have influenced both visual mass media and research include the American *civil rights era* during the 1950s-60s, or the *Vietnam/hippie era* of the 1960s-70s. British cultural studies scholar, Stuart Hall (1997,1997b), referred to these historical moments as

regimes of representation and similarly, French philosopher and poststructuralist, Michel Foucault (1973) developed his notion of *épistémè*.

In Hall's work, *The Spectacle of the 'Other'* (1997b), he discussed the signifying power of photographic images of Black athletes in the news media and how they gained meaning when they were read within certain contexts. He indicated that images gained or accumulated meaning when viewed or read in relation to other "text and media" (p. 232) in different historical moments. This interplay of images across various text and media, such as news, entertainment, or editorial, created what he called *inter-textuality* and they form a broader level of representation of otherness within a "particular culture at any one moment" (p. 232). Thus, according to Hall, it is this inter-textuality of imagery and visual effects within certain socio-cultural settings during specific historical moments or eras, which constitute a regime of representation. Furthermore, representation of Otherness as viewed at any particular historical moment by any one particular culture will render different interpretations and understandings based on the unique characteristics of the generation during that moment.

Foucault's (1973) notion of *episteme* (sometimes referred to as *discursive formation*; Foucault, 1972; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008), while not exactly the same as Hall's (1997b) regime of representation, provides added depth to the idea of generational differences of understanding based on historical moments and is a concept embraced by many critical theorists and interpretivists (Allan, 2006; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Rose, 2007; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Willis, 2007). An overarching framework in Foucault's episteme was the equivalence of knowledge and power. In other words, "Foucault asks us to see power in knowledge" (Allan, 2006, p. 289). Foucault argued that each historical

moment, with its attendant generational differences, had a distinctive world outlook, which in turn, directly impacted the inherent essence of knowledge within any given moment. It was this unique attributal characteristic within each generational period that he called episteme. Thus, each historical moment organized its thoughts and outlooks in very specific and unique ways, or as Allan (2006) summarized, “Episteme refers to the mode of thought’s existence” (p. 294), or way of thinking. This notion of episteme therefore, implicated that each generation viewed its world in an exclusive manner and this exclusive vision then did not translate into the same meaning for individuals of differing eras or historical moments. Yet it is not people, per se, that determined their way of thinking, but rather, the prevalent discursive structures of that period. Discursive structures are not limited to written or spoken discourse, but also include visual and non-verbal discourses such as photographs, graphics, architectural design, and institutional practices. As Littlejohn and Foss (2008) noted, “These discursive structures are deeply embedded ways of practicing or expressing ideas, and what people know cannot be separated from the structures of discourse used to express that knowledge” (p. 342). Thus, generational and societal differences in perceptions of representation are not the same.

Putting It All In Perspective

At the outset of this dissertation I stated my interdisciplinary approach to this combined autoethnographic and visual semiotic project. Broadly speaking, this dissertation draws on atomistic disciplines in order to create a synthesis capable of producing a holistic account of my self-identity acculturation journey as depicted within a gallery showing of exhibit narrative panels and studio still-life photographs. Drawing on literature from anthropology and sociology, I have shown how empirical research has actively

investigated the use of objects, artifacts, and photographs in the construction of personal identity. Photographs within this particular context were shown to be domestic or personal, such as family photographs commemorating or documenting key familial events and individuals. Although domestic photographs are incorporated into the upcoming data for interrogation, they do not stand alone. Instead, they are incorporated into professionally crafted studio still-life photographs and as such, I needed to establish photography's role, both scientifically and artistically, as a personal art medium and as a commercial visual aspect of mass media.

In considering visual mass media and the power of the photograph, I reviewed two major visual mass media projects (i.e., *National Geographic* magazine and Kodak's *Colorama*) that had significant impact on American social and personal identity formation during the immediate years preceding the timeline of my *Wunderkammer* project that was analyzed in this dissertation. My theoretical framework that addressed visual literacy and visual semiotics draws on literature from media studies and visual studies and are important underpinning facets of how individuals view and interpret images they encounter. Further, I have drawn on literature from cultural studies and postmodernist theorists in an effort to demonstrate how stereotyping or representation within visual media and personal visual images affect and influence social and personal identity construction.

Thus, in my interdisciplinary spirit, I have reviewed diverse literature in order to contribute my voice to the conversation regarding self-identity construction and in particular, how identity is constructed through photographs. As Forest (2007) noted, "Holistic studies are rare, as are *emic* studies" (p. 55, emphasis in original), and this is where my dissertation will contribute to and fill a gap within that conversation. In the next chap-

ter I will continue the literature discussion, but from a methodological stance, as I begin the process of intertwining the art of autoethnography with critical visual analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Although this study is about understanding construction of self-identity within my childhood Southern cultural context through construction and deconstruction of a photographic exhibit, concurrently, it is about interdisciplinarity in approach to methodological design. The primary data analyzed in this visual autoethnography comprises narrative text and photographic images, thus necessitating a blending of methods for a holistic view of the narrative that emerged from my research questions. Mixing methods within a qualitative dissertation study is nothing new and is especially encouraged by Biklen and Casella (2007). I call this study a visual autoethnography because the data derive from text and photographs I produced, which layered my personal narrative with a foundation of Southern cultural ideologies as my temporal and human geographies (Rose, 2008) changed during my acculturation journey. However, to arrive at the end product of this visual autoethnography, I employed disparate yet complementary methods indicative of my interdisciplinarity from educational and visual media studies.

Focusing on the educational perspective, therefore, I decided to explore a new genre of research known as *self-study* (Burke, 2007; Dissertation Committee, personal communication, August 19, 2010), which includes autoethnography. In order to maintain continuity across time and geography, I framed my autoethnography through the *three-dimensional space approach* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Since visual studies are often directly associated with media studies

(Poster, 2002), I decided to employ Rose's (2007) *critical visual methodology* for understanding my photographs from a visual interpretation standpoint through visual semiotics.

Thus, in this chapter I discuss and explain my data sources and their analyses, which included autoethnography framed within the three-dimensional space approach and critical visual methodology. I also explicate my position on qualitative trustworthiness, as one would discuss validity and reliability. Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a discussion on potential limitations of autoethnography.

Data Sources

The central question this dissertation seeks to answer concerns self-identity. How self-identity is defined through the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of my photographic exhibit called *Wunderkammer: Specimen views of my postmodern life*. Thus, the data ($N = 18$) collected for this autoethnography was purposeful, in that I wrote about myself in relation to my *Wunderkammer* photography exhibit and how I constructed a sense of my self-identity through those artifacts in relation to my Southern cultural history. Those data consisted of both hard samples (i.e., photographs and texts) and soft samples (i.e., "memories of my lived experience" [Wall, 2008, p. 45]).

Primary data for semiotic analysis using the critical visual methodology consisted of photographic images ($n = 9$), which were composed as still-life compositions of personal artifacts that chronicled my life over half a century. In addition, there were corresponding narrative texts⁵ ($n = 9$), which I called *story panels*, that accompanied each photograph and those data were the genesis of the autoethnography proper. Secondary data included retrospective field texts (Burke, 2007; Ellis, 2004) in the form of my reflexive

⁵ Narrative texts were based on personal memories, journals, family snapshots, and other artifacts.

journaling during a one-year period that encompassed pre- and post-exhibit activity; I refer to these as my personal field notes. Thus, my field notes were combined with the narrative panel texts and framed within the *three-dimensional space approach* in order to write my autoethnography. Additional family snapshots, documents, personal journals, memos, and artifacts not contained within the *Wunderkammers* became tertiary data sources. These three data sources therefore, created a triangle of validation, which Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to as triangulation. I will further explicate this topic in a subsequent discussion on trustworthiness.

Procedure

Photographic images, narrative text panels, and my transcribed field notes were imported into *HyperRESEARCH* qualitative data analysis software for data manipulation. This software was employed for the ethnographic analysis used to construct my autoethnography and for the semiotic analysis using the critical visual methods (Rose, 2007). Through inductive open coding, I developed an extensive code manual with definitions to guide subsequent coding processes for the photographs and all texts (i.e., narrative story panels and field notes). Thus, I moved from general descriptive codes of data chunks to more focused analytical codes, similar to axial coding used in grounded theory research, which allowed me to recognize recurring ideological themes and patterns within the data. Once my data coding was completed, I used this information as a foundation for developing what Spradley (1979, 1980) called a cultural domain analysis. During both the coding process and the domain analysis I employed the traditional ethnographic technique of memoing for both texts and photographs. Once the cultural domains were identified, I created concept maps and numerous taxonomies to link the emerging themes and pat-

terns. In turn, following Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion for describing and analyzing data within-case studies such as mine, I created a time-ordered display known as an *event listing* (see Appendix D). This enabled me to reconstruct the data around the major actors and temporal geographical shifts in order to tell my acculturation story of self-identity, as portrayed in data Chapter 4. In similar fashion, I used *HyperRESEARCH* during the semiotic analysis of the photographs for addressing the various modalities found within the three sites of meaning making, which is explicated in data Chapter 5.

Data Analyses

Data analyses for this two-part study encompassed two primary overarching and disparate methodologies: autoethnography and critical visual semiotic analysis. In order to write my autoethnography, I relied on traditional ethnographic data analysis methods (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Spradley, 1979, 1980), as mentioned in the previous section, framed within a three-dimensional space approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). To fully interrogate my photographic images in the semiotic analysis, I used Rose's (2007) critical visual methodology to extrapolate meaning from three sites of meaning making: production of the image, the image itself, and the viewing audience. Therefore, I will define these aspects of my analyses in the following subsections.

Autoethnography: From an Ethnographic Perspective

Autoethnography, as an overarching research genre, addresses a diverse mixture of research topics, such as art-based exploration of storytellers (Forest, 2007), personal transformation (McCaskill, 2008), whiteness theory (Burke, 2007), comedy (French, 1998), individual identity (Muncey, 2005), international adoption (Wall, 2008), sports

injuries (Sparkes, 1996), and academic tourism (Pelias, 2003), to name a few. But what is autoethnography? As a personal narrative form, autoethnography is typically written in the first-person voice, which situates the researcher-author within a given cultural context and is affected by historical and social structures (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Additionally, autoethnography incorporates the personal experiences and viewpoints of the researcher and they do this “by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their personal connection to the project, or by using personal knowledge to help them in the research process” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 741).

Within the broad expanse of autoethnographic narrative writing, explication of method application and conducting the analysis is limited. Muncey (2005), in writing about doing autoethnography that relied primarily on the researcher’s memory, or *head-notes* according to Ottenburg (1990), offered four techniques, that form what she called the *art of memory*, which are: snapshots, artifacts, metaphor, and journey. After reading her article a number of times, I am left wondering how she actually applies her methodology. From my perspective, she uses these four techniques more as a method of validation, similar to other qualitative *triangulation* theories (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994), which acquire data from multiple sources for corroboration. In 2006, Wall discussed her disillusionment with the lack of explication available, “I was disappointed to find that much of what was written on autoethnography (or otherwise labeled autobiographical research) was highly abstract and lacking in specificity” (p. 6). But, according to Ellis and Bochner (2000), a limited range of qualitative methods are used as strategies within autoethnography (p. 740).

In paraphrasing autoethnographic advocates, Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Reed-Danahay (1997), Wall (2006) argued the level of and types of methodological strategies varies along a continuum. Wall suggested this continuum for situating autoethnographic writing based on writing emphasis: (a) Auto (self), (b) Ethno (cultural link), and (c) Graphy (application of a research process). The *auto* (self) portion of the continuum, presents a personal narrative that is highly evocative and literary in style. She noted that some scholars viewed this form of autoethnography as being less rigorous or less scientific and falling into a non-traditional postmodern camp. The *ethno* (cultural link) falls roughly in the center of the continuum and is theoretically supported yet personal. Here I see more of a pragmatist viewpoint. Lastly, *graphy* (research processes) she proffered as being conservative and methodologically more rigorous, with tendencies toward the more traditional scientific or post-positivistic stance. I graphically illustrate this in Figure 1.

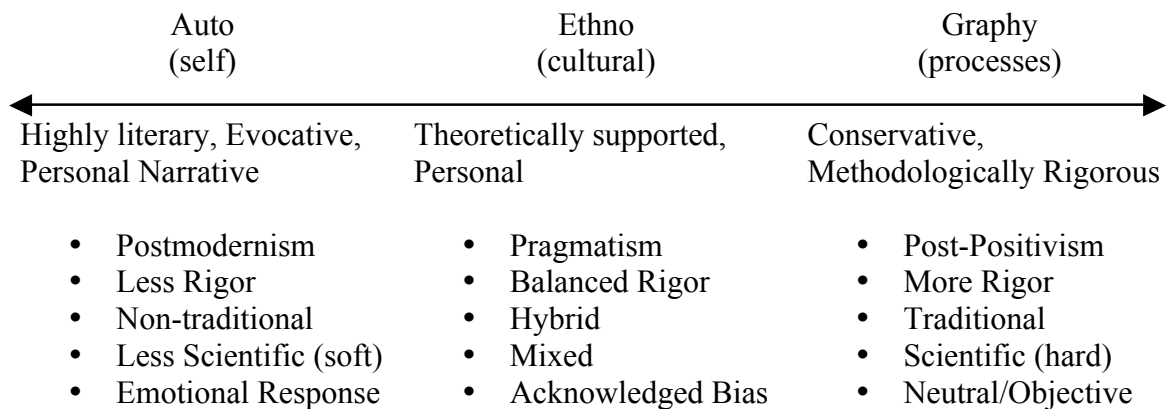


Figure 1. Autoethnographic writing continuum.

Eventually, Wall (2006) found herself writing and analyzing farther to the right side of the continuum, in order to provide the concreteness that she needed for her particular project. Continuums are not rigid but offer some elasticity for the researcher and this was the case during my analyses. While I initially situated myself somewhere in the

middle of the continuum, depending on the analysis to be conducted, I adjusted myself accordingly. Since I am drawn to using methodological tools found in traditional ethnography (Spradley, 1979, 1980), such as open coding that is followed by focused coding, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and metaphors (Schmitt, 2005), found on the right side of the continuum, I pursued this route during data analysis of the narrative panels, field notes, and other documents and artifacts. However, during the actual rewriting of my personal narrative as suggested by Nash (2004), I shifted with the elasticity of the continuum and repositioned myself to the left side as needed, as with my research poems (Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006; Langer & Furman, 2004; Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Three-Dimensional Space Model

To frame the autoethnographic portion of my methodology, I used the three-dimensional space approach, which originated with Clandinin and Connelly (2000). They initially described this method for analyzing qualitative narrative data as *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, which they claimed was “associated with Dewey’s theory of experience, specifically with his notions of situation, continuity, and interaction” (p. 50). Within their schema, *interaction* involves the personal and social; *continuity* considers the past, present, and future as the researcher moves through the text and other data; and lastly, they combined the previous two aspects with *situation*, which is the notion of place.

Further explication of *interaction* requires the researcher to look *inward* and *outward* within the personal and social dimension. Inwardly, the researcher needs to consider the internal conditions of the storyteller, such as: feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions

and moral dispositions. On the other hand, the outward dimension looks toward existential conditions and the environment. Thus, the researcher needs to move along this inward and outward dimension to effectively explore meaning between the personal and social. Next, based on earlier writing (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), the researcher's narrative moves *backward* and *forward* along the dimensional axis of *continuity*; that is, past, present, and future. This sense of continuity is what I call *temporality* and is our personal memory time machine, which allows one to travel "back in time and place, in memory, to [a place] that no longer exists" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 55). The movement along this dimension therefore, creates a sense of "a remembered past in one place to a present moment in another, all the while imaginatively constructing an identity for the future" (p. 55). The final axis of this approach is *situation*, which situates the narrative within specific locations of place. Clandinin and Connelly explained this is the "specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes", in other words, where the temporal interactions take place.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002; see also Creswell, 2007) have used this approach and wrote about the elements of narrative analysis: (1) personal experiences become stories, based on field texts, and retold using narrative elements found in the three-dimensional space approach; and, (2) the stories are then retold in "a chronological sequence, and incorporating the setting or place of the participants' experiences" (p. 158). Thus, I deployed this framework while conducting the textual analysis of my narrative panels from the *Wunderkammer* photography exhibit, along with my field notes and other artifacts.

Critical Visual Methodology

Jewitt and Oyama (2001), along with van Leeuwen (2001), proffered their versions of social semiotic visual analysis based on Roland Barthes' (1972, 1977) notions to unmask multiple layers of meaning within "the syntactic relations between the people, places and things depicted in images" (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001, p. 3). Their use of social semiotic visual analysis (as previously delineated in my literature review chapter) resonates with the direction of my research and lends itself to application and structure of Rose's (2007) critical visual methods approach. Similarly, Aiello (2008) used social semiotic visual analysis in her research on constructing European social identity. By combining the framework of social semiotic visual analysis (which I prefer to simply call *visual semiotics*) with critical visual methodology in data Chapter 5, I explicated meaning from the multiple layers available in my *Wunderkammer* exhibit as part of my autoethnography of self-identity. At this point, I will focus more detail on critical visual methodology.

Rose (2007) posited a theory for critically analyzing "found visual images" (p. 12) within research method designs that investigate visual culture. Although my *Wunderkammer* photographs are not "found" images, since I professionally crafted them in the studio, they do contain several "found" images from my past. Regardless whether the images are found by or crafted by the researcher, her solid methodological approach to image interpretation is equally applicable to both genres of photographs, which is why I used her methods in my analysis. Recently Rose told me (personal communication, December 3, 2010) she was modifying her approach to include researcher created images. However, she began developing her methodology during the last century as a means of

teaching students how to critically interpret visual images (see Rose, 1996). During the ensuing years, she refined this theory, resulting with the publication of *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials* (2007). Her theory of critical visual methodology (CVM) could be applied in both quantitative and qualitative studies that include, but are not limited to (a) content analysis, (b) semiology (i.e., semiotics), (c) psychoanalysis, (d) discourse analysis, (e) audience studies, (f) anthropological studies, and (g) photo-elicitation or photo-documentation research. In other words, this methodology can be utilized across broad fields of inquiry. The key feature of this methodology is not only its focus on the image, but also its production and reception by its audience. Therefore, I will summarize the underlying model of her theory. First, at the visual literacy level, the visual consumer needs to consider how images create meaning in order to produce interpretations of visual images, which occurs at three disparate *sites* of interpretation or meaning making. Rose also suggested within each of the three sites of interpretation for visual images, there resides three *modalities* for image interpretation intertwined therein. A closer look at each of these components is in order and how these three disparate sites of image interpretation are simultaneously imbricated with these different modalities.

The sites at which visual image interpretation eventuate are: (a) *the site of image production*, (b) *the site of the image itself*, and (c) *the viewing site of audiences* (Rose, 2007). Furthermore, at each of these interpretive sites, Rose envisioned three modalities concurrently contributing at various levels to understanding visuals: (a) the *technological* modality, (b) the *compositional* modality, and (c) the *social* modality. The technological production of images involves various physical apparatus implementation (i.e., equip-

ment or tools) and their associated technologies. They could range from simple paintbrushes to digital cameras to photo-blogs on the Internet. Compositional modality, on the other hand, references the formal structures of an image, such as color, positive-negative space, implied lines of direction, and so forth. In other words, how the compositional elements are used in the denotation of visual content within the image frame. Finally, social modality concerns “the social, economic, political and institutional practices and relations that produce, saturate and interpret an image” (p. 258). This social modality is the plane where connotation resides, such as social or political ideologies. Rose, therefore, situated each of these modalities within three sites of image interpretation. See Figure 2, which shows this concept in relation to questions the researcher might ask regarding the interaction of sites and modalities.

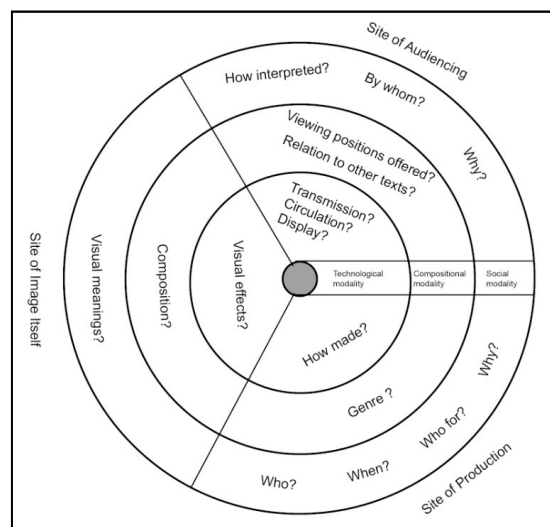


Figure 2. Image sites and modalities for visual analysis. Adapted from Rose’s (2007) critical visual methodology. Used with permission from Gillian Rose.

The above information outlines the core of Rose’s (2007) critical visual methodology as I have adapted it for the visual semiotic analysis of my *Wunderkammer* project. Thus, I employed Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) *three-dimensional space approach* as

suggested by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), to autoethnographically interpret the narrative text panels and field notes; while broadly using the theoretical lens of Barthes’ (1972, 1977) notion of visual semiotics in conjunction with Rose’s (2007) *critical visual approach* for interpreting the photographic images from my *Wunderkammer* exhibit. This methodological approach is graphically organized in Figure 3. Thus, by combining these two approaches I developed my visual autoethnography in the spirit of interdisciplinary research.

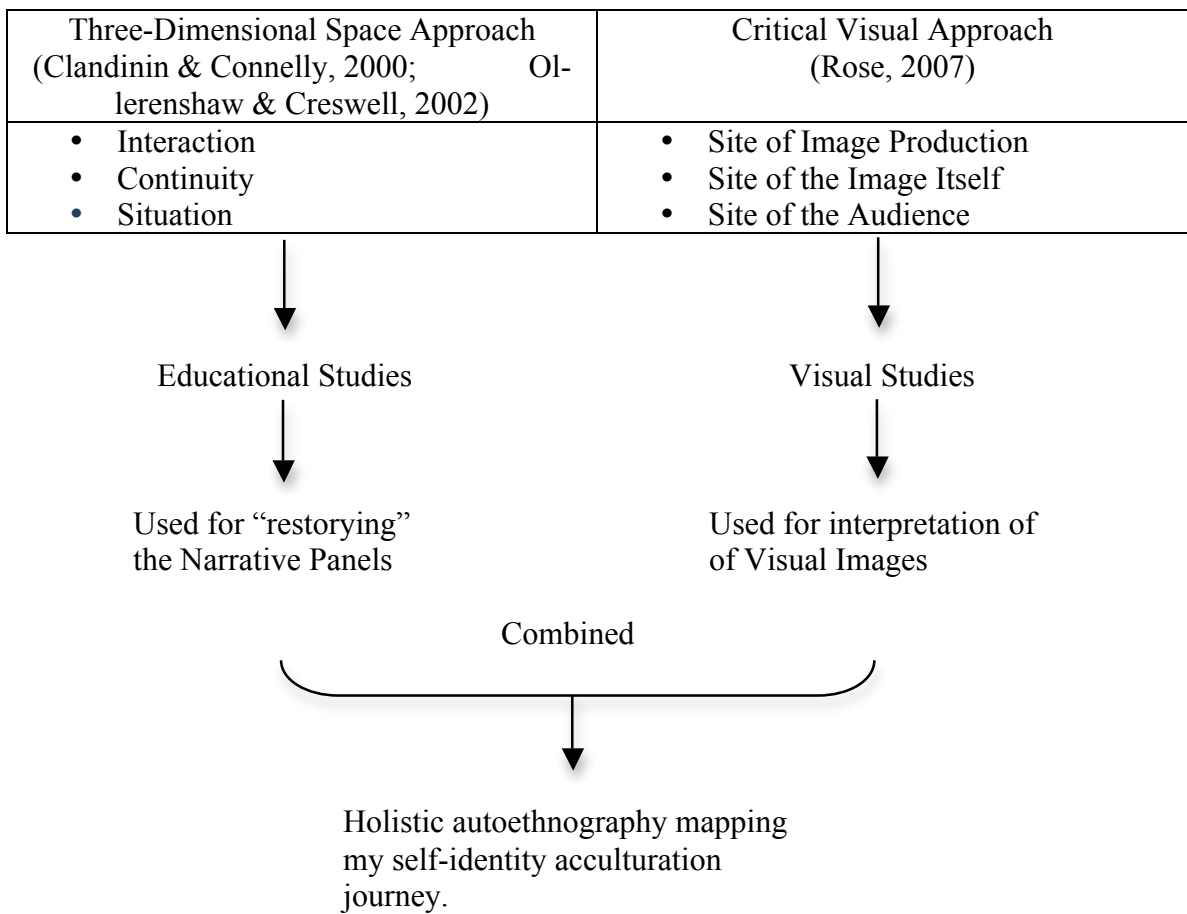


Figure 3. Combining two methodologies for an interdisciplinary methods approach.

Trustworthiness and Related Issues

Researcher Bias

For some academicians concerns for researcher bias may need addressing. Regardless of the *other* culture an ethnographer is attempting to analyze, he or she needs to realize they themselves are cultural products and thus bring certain biases to their projects, such as the case of my Southern upbringing. Fetterman (2010) addressed this issue frontally when he stated:

Ethnographers cannot be completely neutral. We are all products of our culture. We have personal beliefs, biases, and individual tastes. Socialization runs deep. The ethnographer can guard against the more obvious biases, however, by making them explicit and by trying to view another culture's practices impartially. (p. 24)

Such was the case with this personal autoethnography. I was immersed in a racially charged segregated South during my most impressionable years as an elementary student being subjected to numerous Southern institutionalized ideologies through school, church and various civic organizations, such as Scouts and Little League.

Thus, in following his recommendations, Fetterman (2010) hoped the ethnographer could observe another culture's unfamiliar practices "without making value judgments" (p. 24). Likewise, Willis (2007) urged qualitative researchers to recognize and confront bias directly. As opposed to positivism's notion of researcher neutrality and bias free research, ethnographers and others working under the qualitative rubric of interpretivism, reject the "very idea that you can be objective and neutral in research. You pick certain things to study because you have an interest" (p. 210) and thus you have bias. Deal with it and acknowledge it, were Willis' mantras and letting the audience know is essential: "The researcher should make the reader of a study aware of his or her biases" (p. 210).

Ellis (2004) noted sometimes the researcher is too close to the subject or interviewees due to that researcher's personal experience. This can cause a narrowing of vision and thus the autoethnographic researcher needs to take extra care to broaden his or her vision in that particular research project. In the case of the present emic research, I functioned both as an insider of 1960s Southern culture and as a researcher investigating my personal situation framed within that historical context. As Fetterman (2010) noted, I am not completely neutral since I am a product of that Southern culture. However, I recognize that I am not locked in that peculiar historical moment and as I attempt to bracket or suspend my beliefs, notions, or attitudes in these matters, many of these aspects of myself have changed over the intervening decades. Additionally, I pursued a more rigorous analytical approach to my data manipulation in order to further neutralize my biases. Nonetheless, I have worked diligently to minimize bias, yet I also recognize who I am and that aspect is part and parcel of this autoethnography. Now, having considered my bias within autoethnographic project, I refocus attention to research trustworthiness.

But Can I Trust This?

Validity, a kingpin in positivistic research paradigms, is that worrisome word for many young researchers in their quest to justify the research project or study. From the positivistic paradigm, Gliner, Morgan, and Leech (2009) suggested multiple types of evidence for validity such as: (1) *internal* validity, which infers the independent variable indeed causes the dependent variable; (2) *external* validity addresses finding generalizability to other populations; (3) *measurement* validity underscores the individual measures accuracy; and (4) *research* validity, which situates on the previous triple foundation above, speaks to the "quality or merit of the whole study" (p. 100).

Much of my reading on traditional ethnography from an anthropological and sociological viewpoint focuses with a similar lens from this positivistic paradigm mindset and builds on similar scientific constructs such as *triangulation* (Maxwell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994) that employs varied methods “such as interviews, census data, and documents—to ‘validate’ findings” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934), to ensure proper validity and acceptance within the social science community. However, from an interpretivist worldview perspective, validity is a goal constructed within a relative context and not a final product, according to Maxwell (1996). More recently, Nash (2004), who writes extensively about scholarly personal narrative within the autoethnographic writing genre, equated validity with “narrative truth” (p. 38) and from a postmodern standpoint takes on multifaceted criteria “as trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, situatedness, introspectiveness / self-reflection, and universalizability” (p. 38).

I find Nash’s (2004) notion similar to Richardson’s (2000) views of ethnographic genre blurring by the inclusion of alternative creative narratives such as “poetry, drama, conversations, reader’s theater, and so on” (p. 929). Her view of validity reflected Nash’s ideas and again, from a postmodernist stance, is called *crystallization* (p. 934; see also Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). The crystal becomes a validity metaphor that moves beyond the fixed unyielding triangle of positivistic thinking and allows the postmodern personal narrative scholar to view truthfulness and trustworthiness through multiplistic refractions within and without themselves. This postmodern concept pushes our limits of understanding of both our data and their analyses, while providing rich complexity to understanding. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) addressed this issue head-on:

Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity”; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate them-

selves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (p. 963)

Thus, as the crystal has multiple sides, it provides multiple disciplinary views for the researcher to consider, as was the case during the writing of my autoethnography. As Richardson (2000) argued the multidimensionality of valid perspectives, Janesick (2000) noted well that “what we see when we view a crystal, for example, depends on how we view it, how we hold it up to the light or not” (p. 392). In other words, the postmodern qualitative paradigm moves beyond the rigid psychometric “trinity of validity, reliability, and generalizability” (p. 390) and encourages us to acknowledge that passionate qualitative research is not governed by a dispassionate, inhumane positivistic paradigm (see p. 394).

Ellis (1997, 2004), on the other hand, distilled this complex notion of validity to its essence between reader, participants, and writer, as that of *verisimilitude*, evoking “a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible” (2004, p. 124). Or, as she described validity within the context of evocative autoethnography, it takes on the quality of being authentic and within the realm of possibility. The generalizability of the story then, “can be judged by whether it speaks to readers about their experience” (1997, p. 133). Thus, as the autoethnographer and the reader enter into a dialogic cycle of evocative scholarly storytelling and reader verisimilar acceptance, validity and generalizability is constructed between the two. As we construct, we become constructed. Therefore, as Nash (2004) described his constructivist circle of validity, “The stories we construct then turn around and construct us, and we them... forever... Locate the personal story of the truth teller, and you will go a long way toward locating what the truth teller

really means by ‘truth’” (p. 36). This constructivist circle therefore, continues and dynamically modifies with each changing generation and historical moment that define periods in history, which have significant influence upon society and culture.

As I explicated earlier in this chapter the elasticity of the autoethnographic continuum in regards to rigorous methodology, so to I view this notion of trustworthiness. Janesick (2000) examined historical and periodic discussions among qualitative researchers’ notions of triangulation as though it were a stepchild to the psychometric paradigm. For instance, she cites Denzin’s 1970s identification of four basic types of triangulation: *data*, *investigator*, *theory*, and *methodological*, which was followed in the 1990s by *interdisciplinary triangulation* that she wrote about. However, as qualitative research gained strong footing in the 21st century, she turned to Richardson’s (2000) *crystallization* concept as “part of the postmodern project” (p. 392), which solidly replaced the revered psychometric trinity of validity, reliability, and generalizability. Most recently Ellis (1997, 2004), proffered her notion of *verisimilitude* among the research audience as a viable qualitative replacement to positivistic notions. From my perspective however, these notions would happen in an ideal research world, of which we have not yet arrived. Consequently, in this study, I allowed this notion to slide along the elastic methodological continuum. By this I mean traditional triangulation was deployed through multiple data sources: photographs, narrative panels, field notes, and other artifacts and documents. Additionally, I have used two disparate methodologies in order to derive complimentary meaning from my data. Generalizability is not a goal in this study per se, as it examined myself and to the best of my knowledge, there are no other replications of my unique self. However, I am strongly attracted to Ellis’ notion of *verisimilitude* and hope my reader

respond to my narrative as believable, authentic, and within the realm of possibility as each reader connects on a personal level through the vignettes I provided to describe my self-identity construction through objects acquired on my acculturation journey.

Potential Limitations

Postmodernism challenges the traditional psychometric research agenda established by previous generations, especially “that so often overtakes the discourse in the education and human services field” (Janesick, 2000, p. 390). Doubt that any one universal method should be privileged is at the nexus of postmodernism thought (Holt, 2003; Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Thus, “postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interest” (Richardson, 2000, p. 928, emphasis in original), especially for those editors and researchers of a positivistic old-guard regime. Limitations therefore, confront works in the nature of my dissertation topic, just as experienced by Holt (2003) while attempting to publish his autoethnography. Wall (2008) described autoethnography as being an “avant-garde method” (p. 8) that draws its share of criticisms, since it lies at “the boundaries of scientific research” (Holt, 2003, p. 1).

Recent autoethnography literature acknowledges criticisms leveled from the dominant research regime, which focuses on central issues of validity, dependability, and trustworthiness (Holt, 2003; McCaskill, 2008). I addressed these concerns by way of metaphor of the elastic methodology continuum and by referencing and adhering to notions of *crystallization* (Richardson, 2000) and of *verisimilitude* (Ellis, 2004) as the postmodern counter-points in qualitative methodological rigor. Another limiting issue appearing in the literature is the idea that writing about one’s self or experience “is a strategy

that permits intellectual elites to control the stories that get told” (Ellis, 1997, p. 133). Ellis replies to this notion in sardonic manner, when she claimed, “I doubt that people whose voices have been silenced identify with the talk of statistical tests and hypothesis testing. Do you think that people find their stories among the statistical analyses of large databases about social minutiae?” (p. 134). Additionally, she asserted that narrative writing should “open up spaces for others to tell about their lives” as valid and provide opportunity to break the silence through the method of “storytelling about life epiphanies” (p. 134). I fully concur with these notions and have attempted to demonstrate this through my writing.

Self-indulgent narcissism (Atkinson, 1997; Holt, 2003) was also a concern for autoethnographic dissertation writers Burke (2007) and McCaskill (2008). Specifically, from this particular limitation, Atkinson claimed that some narrative writers’ work “seem to float in a social vacuum....There is an extraordinary absence of social context, social action, and social interaction” (p. 339). Thus, as McCaskill noted, these concerns point to “a focus on a single, subjective subject [that] lacks genuinely thick description and threatens to substitute a psychotherapeutic for a sociological view of life” (p. 99). She also mentioned some researchers and academics place barriers for autoethnographic acceptance by claiming a deficit of systematic and methodological rigor. However, my study is ontologically and epistemologically grounded within a social context of acculturation and is empirically rigorous through interdisciplinary methodological analyses and multiple data sources.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined a combination of interdisciplinary research methods to analyze a complex set of data in order to reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. My research focused on Barthesian visual semiotic analysis using a *critical visual approach*, coupled with traditional ethnographic research methods using the *three-dimensional space approach*, to frame, analyze, and reconstruct my autoethnographic personal narrative of growing up Southern and its concomitant affects. This was accomplished through the data, which are the images and artifacts associated with my public gallery exhibition *Wunderkammer: Specimen views of my postmodern life*. The goal was to produce a thick descriptive autoethnographic narrative that answered my research questions in regards to my ontological and epistemological viewpoints on self-identity.

I provided a working definition of autoethnography as situated within traditional ethnography's literature. After consideration of issues related to autoethnography, I investigated the role of *three-dimensional space approach* with its consideration of *interaction, continuity, and situation* and how I situated it along the autoethnographic writing continuum. Next, I explicated in detail Rose's (2007) *critical visual methodology* and its sites of *production, image, and audience*; within each site, *technological, compositional, and social* modalities. Following this explication, I elucidated my views on qualitative trustworthiness in light of the positivistic trinity of validity, reliability, and generalizability. Lastly, in this chapter I expressed potential limitations encountered in this type of research activity. Thus, I have discussed my methodological approach based on the interdisciplinary nature of my research topic: one method for textual narrative analysis and

one method for visual image analysis. In the process of combining the two, my goal was to demonstrate a complete, holistic analysis that was not capable through using a single method. I now turn to my data chapters, starting with my narrative story, or autoethnography, followed by a critical visual analysis of the photographs from the gallery exhibit.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Southern Baseball

*Within this Wunderkammer
typical for any kid
of that era
provided they were White*

*all was normal
there were no girls
on our teams back then
Within this Wunderkammer*

*all of my teammates and opponents alike, were White
typical for any kid
of that era
all was normal back then*

*Within this Wunderkammer
all of my teammates and opponents alike, were White
I had no concept of race
It was just the way things were then*

*I was going to segregated public schools
I had no concept of race
racism, or racial stereotyping*

*that age of innocence
a sense of wonder
an overall silence in our home
all was normal back then*

Within this Wunderkammer

Scouting in the South

*It was the normal thing to do
It was American. I joined the Cub Scouts
No Blacks, Asian, Latinos, or Indians allowed!
all was normal back then*

*All my buddies at school were Scouts
I became a Scout as well
as so typical throughout the 1960s
was in "pack" #312 and "den" #3*

*3rd grade in 1963
mother had become the den mother
my father never took much interest
Within this Wunderkammer*

*Within this Wunderkammer
innocuous artifacts: the arrowhead collection
so typical of that era
Euro-Americans had effectively rendered Native Americans invisible*

*I joined a "Webelos" den
my father's job kept us moving*

*I never made it into the ranks of the Boy Scouts
Within this Wunderkammer*

Backstory Narrative: Growing Up Southern

In this chapter I will describe portions of my life's journey and its concomitant self-identity and acculturation processes as lived experiences that temporally transit geographical locale changes, along with my personal definitive encounters with Others. It was these encounters that became decisive and defining moments in my understanding of the dichotomous signs of my Southern childhood and the ultimate attitudinal changes as the personal journey continued. I have used traditional qualitative analytical techniques to analyze the narrative text panels from my *Wunderkammer* photographic exhibit, along with my journal entries from my field notes and other documents in order to build this story; a form of triangulation, if you will. This involved deconstruction of the narrative panels, which textually and denotatively described the artifacts and objects contained within each photograph, as well as how the panels connotatively proffered ideological commentary at the second level of signification. Additionally, by deconstructing these texts, I was able to analyze numerous cultural domains, discover taxonomies, and create various analytical displays, which in turn, allowed me to reconstruct the *scholarly personal narrative* (Nash, 2004) that follows. Further, through a series of chronological vignettes, based on the *three-dimensional space model* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) of personal and social interaction, continuity of time, and the situation of place, I have attempted to weave my story in an effort for you, my reader, to vicariously connect with my lived experience and in so doing, possibly gain insight into the authenticity of your own life's acculturation journey and construction of self-identity.

Where It Began

All stories need a setting for the plot and drama to unfold and my story is no different in that regard. Time is also a requisite for these types of endeavors, as are characters. But, this story does not happen in a galaxy far, far away. Indeed, it begins in the northern hemisphere of planet Earth, in a region of the southern United States of America collectively known as the *South*. As to the time when this story began, well, in some regards it began more than 330 years ago when my seventh great-grandfather, Arthur Ownby, sailed from Lancaster, England to the New World and a southern English colony known as *Virginia* as an indentured servant. His story in the colonies began sometime before 1681 and set into motion a Southern heritage that found its way into my life ten generations later as a child growing up Southern. His descendents and my ancestors (Terry Ownby, 1992) remained in the southern colonies and documents obtained from national and state archives have revealed these Southern men to be patriotic to the American cause. They served in nearly every war of this nation's early history: the *American Revolution*, the *War of 1812*, the *Mexican-American War of 1846*, and ultimately, the *American Civil War*. These patriotic yeomen and millwrights, of the American South, were divided during that particular war with some that served the Federal cause, while nearly 60, including my great-great-grandfather Terry C. K. P. Ownby, served the Confederate States of America. But, that is the making of another story and I simply relate these facts here to broadly paint a portrait of my particular Southern heritage and its underlying influences that have percolated down through the decades to where I am today.

My personal story began midway through the 20th century when two young people met at a mutual friend's high school graduation party. The girl, a recent high school graduate, was from Missouri, typically called a "border state" of the South (Beck, Frandsen, & Randall, 2007, p. xv); while the boy was a true Southerner from Tennessee, who was stationed at an Air Force base in Illinois, which he considered to be too far "north" for his liking. Quickly falling in love three months later, during the onset of the Korean Conflict, along with another couple, they drove all night along the back roads of southern Missouri and crossed state lines to Pocahontas, Arkansas, where they paid the local justice-of-the-peace to marry them. Fortunately for the girl, the Air Force did not send her fresh, young husband to that foreign conflict, but instead, sent him further "north" to Indiana and Iowa. When the military police action in Korea reached an armistice three years later, the newly weds resettled to Missouri and the following year I arrived on the scene.

Early Days and Route 66

During the mid- to late-1950s, my pre-school years, was marked by numerous changes in my physical geography. While I have no recollection of early trips into the South, family snapshot photo albums depict fishing adventures with my Grandpa Ownby at his home in Florida when I was two years of age, and other family activities in Tennessee with cousins on a family farm. Vacations, or as my father used to say, *road trips*, included a lengthy, tiring, and hot summer trip along *Route 66* from Missouri to California to visit mother's relatives in San Diego, which included a short side-trip into Baja Mexico's Tijuana and Ensenada. However, by the time I was four years old, we moved to New Mexico because of my father's job transfer to *White Sands Missile Range*. At this

point I have fond memories of living in the mountain community of High Rolls in the *Lincoln National Forest*, east of a basin town called Alamogordo. Here is where my first encounters with people of color occurred, in the form of Native Americans and Mexicans.

During the two-year period we lived in New Mexico numerous car trips in our black 1950 *Oldsmobile 88 Futuramic* were taken south along U.S. 54 to the border towns of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, for such things as custom-made bowling balls and leather boots for my father, or eating and shopping for authentic Mexican souvenirs at the old town *mercado*. On many of these trips, my father insisted we walk over the pedestrian bridge spanning the *Rio Grande River* that separated the U.S. from Mexico. Father took great pleasure in tossing quarters into the muddy river and watching Mexican boys dive in and retrieve the silver coins. He always would laugh and exclaim his amazement at how those *wetbacks*, as he called them, could find the coins in that muddy water. Back home in the mountains, however, whenever we encountered Native Americans he always derogatively called them *drunk Indians*, regardless of their state of being. I sensed from his pejorative tone that because these people were not White, they were not equals and therefore were people to be avoided. Besides, in all the black and white TV shows like *Rin Tin Tin* or the *Lone Ranger*, the Indians were always the bad guys! On the other hand, my mother was silent about these topics and my memories only recall my father's comments and attitude.

Look Away Dixieland

By the winter of 1959 life was uprooted again with a temporary stay in Missouri and then followed by a semi-permanent move to Florida for my father's job in the aero-

space industry. We first moved to the swampland of north Merritt Island to be near his work at Cape Canaveral. Between the maddening swarms of dragon flies and too many alligators, my mother demanded we move back to the mainland and thus we settled in the rural area just north of Titusville in time for me to start first grade at the old Bayview Elementary schoolhouse in downtown. This rural citrus farming area known as La-Grange, was situated halfway between Titusville and Mims. It was here I would remain for the next six years and develop my childhood impressions of life and human interactions.

This was an age of innocence playing in the farmers' orange groves, attending the small country church, and watching rockets launch men into space from across the *Indian River*, which separated the mainland from Merritt Island and Cape Canaveral. But, it was also a time of fear; a fear that I learned from watching the nightly news on our small black and white television (TV), which depicted a gloomy forecast of nuclear holocaust, missile strikes from Cuba, and possible social uprisings from the *colored people*. I remember very distinctly my fear of Blacks becoming too powerful and overthrowing the White community and that they would make us their *slaves* as we had done to them before the Civil War. But my mother would always calm me by telling me not to worry and that *we* would never allow that to happen. First grade was for me a very life altering period and a time that formed deep-seated impressions for me of what life may or may not be in my future.

Second grade was exciting for me however, because now I was getting to take the school bus to a new school called Riverview Elementary, on the south side of Titusville, in north Brevard County. My original school for first grade was Bayview Elementary in

the downtown area on Washington Avenue (Brotemarkle, 2004; Manning & Hudson, 1999) and it had reached its capacity so I was part of an overflow group being bused to Riverview Elementary, on the south edge of town. Catching and riding the school bus was always a somewhat exciting affair, even though mom would come along to the bus stop to hover over us as a guardian. I suppose this was to keep us kids from wondering or playing too close to the highway; U.S. Highway 1 to be exact (which runs the length of the eastern seaboard from Maine through Florida and the locals in my area simply called it Route One, or U.S. 1 by other Southerners [Hazel, 1957]).

Once on the bus, the adventure would begin with many twists and turns bouncing through the surrounding countryside of LaGrange on *Old Dixie Highway*, to pick up other school children for the eventual ride into downtown Titusville on Washington Avenue, passing all the typical small town businesses, including *Morley's Western Auto* (where I bought my first cheap guitar) and the *Dixie Hotel*, and then on down to Riverview Elementary. These journeys through the local Floridian landscape during the early 1960s is where I encountered many of my childhood friends and so, the ritual bus ride was one of excitement to see my buddies and to start harassing the girls who endured our childish pranks. This may sound somewhat typical, however, looking back and contrasting these episodes within the present social condition, this was all but typical. Atypical would be a better description of those bus rides through the bucolic countryside of magnolias, live oaks, and Spanish moss; everyone on the bus was White.

Those bus rides during the 1960s in east central Florida were amidst the sweltering heat of America's *civil rights movement* and Southerners' concerns over desegregation of the public schools. As Rubin and Kilpatrick (1957) pointed out, "More so than at

any time in a century, the South is today divided by controversy. The issue of school segregation dominates the newspaper headlines and demands the attention of all” (p. x). Scholars and others focused on the 1954 landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* as the beginning of this era, when in actuality, one could argue the movement began in earnest with *NAACP* activist Harry T. Moore’s 1951 assassination in Mims, Florida (Brotmarkle, 2004). During that time, many believed the Christmas night bombing of Moore’s home in Mims was carried out by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), but, as with other Southern racist murders, remained unsolved (p. 111). This event occurred just nine years before my arrival in Florida and only 2.5 miles from my childhood home. Racism permeated the social fabric of our local community.

My entire childhood and elementary school days were completely White and most of my encounters with non-Whites, specifically Blacks, occurred vicariously through national and local visual mass media such as TV, newspapers, or the *National Geographic* magazine, which was delivered monthly to our home. When Blacks were encountered in the flesh it was usually at a distance and they were in their allocated areas when in public. For instance, I remember my mother taking my sister and I out for lunch during the summer, sometimes just to the simple lunch counter at *McCrary’s Five and Dime* store on the north side of Titusville next to the boat marina. Signs at the lunch counter announced it was for “Whites Only” and I never gave this a second thought. In the same dime store, there were restrooms and drinking water fountains with placards that boldly stated “Whites Only” or “Colored Only”. I distinctly remember at a very young age, maybe when I was in the first or second grade, getting a drink of water from the water fountain at that particular store and having an old white man raise his voice at me to stop

drinking from the “*nigger* fountain” and demanding “Can’t ya read, boy?” I had no idea it made a difference, water was water from my young perspective.

Everything in the South had its place and I had just stepped out of my place. But segregation was normal, just part of everyday life; I saw this no differently when playing on my all white Little League Baseball team or attending *LaGrange Baptist Church*, which also was all white. Life was simply this way and I knew no difference. Yet, these topics were not overly stressed in my household. What I do recall though, was my parents warning me to steer clear of those “others” (specifically Blacks; Asians or Latinos were rarely mentioned, with the exception of our brief stay in New Mexico when my father would refer to Mexicans as “wetbacks”, he also would occasionally express his prejudice towards Asian women married to White American military personnel as a means to come to the U.S.) and not to get involved with them. This was for my protection, they claimed. This was very similar to Heath’s (1983) depiction of how Whites in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas taught their children during that same era, “parents warned their children to ‘stay away from ’em; leave ’em alone, and they won’t bother you’” (p. 42). I remember my mother telling me virtually the same thing, but also, she insisted that I should simply cross to the other side of the street if I encountered Blacks while I was out and about. Thus, during my childhood in the South, my worldview was dichotomously separated between White and Black and very dissimilar to that of Melton McLaurin (1987), who wrote about his childhood experiences of growing up in North Carolina during the preceding decade and his continual interactions and associations with Blacks in his particular community.

By my tenth birthday in 1964, I was fairly set in my understanding of cultural separation between my normal White world and that of Blacks. I was also at the age where I enjoyed listening to my transistor radio. If per chance I paused on a station playing Black music, my father would tell me that I had no business listening to *jigaboo* (Griffin, 1961) and “jungle bunny music” and that I should tune in a good country-and-western station. I was starting to sense from him that Blacks were not to be associated with or to be part of our lives. During that time period the only Black I saw regularly was an older man called “Joe” and he was a grounds keeper and he also maintained the community swimming pool in my small neighborhood. I knew nothing about this man other than seeing him working and I do not recall any type of interaction with him, since I was taught to avoid Blacks, until the day I missed my school bus.

We were a single-car family and it was my father’s day to drive his carpool group out to Cape Canaveral and my mother was without transportation when my tardiness caused me to miss the bus. But, she was determined I would go to school regardless of my actions and walked down the street to find Joe working at the swimming pool. She explained her situation and asked him to give me a ride to the elementary school that morning. He agreed and reluctantly I climbed into the passenger side of his weathered old 1950s car, with its stale dusty smell that mingled with old cigar smoke. We silently drove along Route 1, taking the most direct way to school; yet it seemed to take forever as I sat next to this looming dark figure of a man that represented to me all that I had been taught in school, church, and Scouts, to fear and to stay away from at all costs. As we neared the school house, I begged him to let me out so I could walk the rest of the way without anyone at school seeing me with this Black man; I felt utterly humiliated. But, Joe would

have nothing to do with my scheme and he told me he would keep his word to my mother to safely deliver me to the front door of the school. This was my first personal encounter with a Black person during my Southern childhood and for me it was a terrifying and humiliating experience that was to become a defining moment in my early acculturation journey.

Later, during the hot summer recess of 1964, my father decided we needed to take a road trip up north to visit places we had read about in the *National Geographic* magazine that he and my mother had subscribed to in order to help my sister and I better understand the world about us. This trip up north took us along the eastern seaboard to New England and the surrounding area, but the main purpose of this family vacation was going to the New York World's Fair and to visit my father's brother, who was stationed at the time with the U.S. Army at the Pentagon in Washington, DC.

For the most part, the trip had been somewhat uneventful but somewhere along a New Jersey turnpike we saw a car ahead of us swerving erratically across the lanes. As my father attempted to pass the car, in which he assumed to be full of "drunks", we saw instead a Black family with several children in the backseat. What caught my parents' attention was that they all appeared to be asleep. Father started honking his car's horn while mother was yelling out her window. The commotion got the driver's attention and my father motioned for him to pull off the road. To my surprise, we stopped with them and father pulled out his ever-present thermos of coffee and took cups full to the man and woman in the other car. We sat there along the side of that hot, busy turnpike and watched this unknown Black man and his wife thank my father for saving their lives and both of them vigorously shaking his hand in gratitude. This was a rare mixed-racial interaction

action to witness between my father and Blacks and this caused for me considerable consternation and cognitive dissonance. Something very rare indeed and something I have not forgotten all these years later.

The following few years after that incident continued on as normal: my school remained segregated, as were all my other social activities like church, Scouts, and my Little League Baseball team. But that was a season of unrest. Even though the 1964 *Civil Rights Act* had been passed and schools were ordered to desegregate, it would be more than two years later before I would attend my first integrated school. Meanwhile, across the nation violence seemed to flow from the wake of the *Civil Rights Act*; three civil-rights workers in Mississippi were murdered by the KKK, Malcolm X was shot to death in Harlem, Black marchers in Alabama were brutally beaten and hospitalized by the police, and racial riots exploded in east Los Angeles. These and similar situations dominated the daily newspapers I delivered in my neighborhood and on the TV nightly news I watched with my family. I knew my world was changing all about me and I grew more fearful thinking about the day I would go to junior high school, where integration would happen in 1966.

Junior high school would mark another defining moment for me in my acculturation journey and it would mark the end of my direct Southern upbringing. Towards the end of sixth grade, my classmates and older boys in the neighborhood would tell me stories about how the “niggers” had little stumps of tails on their butts because their ancestors were monkeys in Africa, and, since we would have to shower together after our physical education classes, we might get to see them. This was disturbing. To be more precise, I was horrified by the notion of taking group communal showers let alone the

thought of black boys with monkey tails and this literally put me beside myself with worry and embarrassment. But, the day arrived in late August of 1966 and I rode the bus to Parkway Junior High School and there I encountered my first Black classmates. We tried hard to see those tails while in the locker room, all the while trying not to be obviously staring at their buttocks. After a few weeks without incident and of not having seen any tails in the locker room, I became friends with a black boy my age and we sat next to each other in English class. His name was confusing in that his given name and surname could be equally the same, such as John Benjamin or Benjamin John⁶. I remember the English teacher, whose name I no longer recall, taking roll call and how she tried to get my new Black friend to explain which name came first or last. After a moment or two of confused dialogue between the two, she flew into a rage. “Boy, you must have constipation of the brain and diarrhea of the mouth,” are the only words I still remember from that seventh grade English teacher at that small junior high school in Titusville, Florida. This was probably my most vivid and memorable quote from that long forgotten teacher, which she hurled at my Black friend and classmate on that sweltering afternoon in the fall of 1966. That was my first experience of attending an *integrated* public junior high school, and to say the least, rather unforgettable. Shortly after that episode, my father’s job required another transfer and we left my Southern childhood home and made our way across the continent to southern California and a small town called Santa Maria.

Love Beads, Incense, and Rock-n-Roll

California was a whole different world for this young Southern teenage boy: girls, hippies, surfers, girls, hot rods, long hair, girls, rock-n-roll, love beads and incense, girls,

⁶ Fictitious names have been used throughout this document.

and dark skinned classmates with odd accents and hard to pronounce last names. These classmates of color were not Black, as I had recently encountered at my Floridian junior high school. Instead, they were Mexican and Chinese, at least that is how I categorized them as a teenager: I was totally unaware of broader ethnic terminology such as Hispanic, Latino, Native American, or Asian. Back at my elementary schools in the South, my teachers had taught us there were only three races, which of course corresponded with Noah's three sons in the Bible, and those were *Caucasian*, *Negroid*, and *Mongoloid*. To me, if they had dark skin, slanted eyes, and had last names such as Sanchez or Loo, they were simply stereotyped as Mexican or Chinese. Besides, in this new town called *Santa Maria*, there were plenty of Mexican and Chinese restaurants and a whole new style of eating that I had not experienced in the South. Life in California created a major cultural change for me, not only in my physical environment, but in my social environment as well. I was encountering cultures that were part of West Coast mainstream life, yet from my limited Southern perspective, these people had only been natives of distant countries and foreigners, such as the ones I had read about in our monthly copies of *National Geographic*.

Being the product of culturally induced racial bigotry from my not so distant Southern past and finding myself spinning in major social and personal upheaval in California's summer of 1968, I sought out other *normal* white males in an effort to regain my equilibrium; my *hellavafella* attitude (Ted Ownby, 1990, 1997), so to speak. This of course led to new forms of negative racial attitudes as I learned new words for these Others, such as *Chinks* for the "Chinese" or *spics*, *wetbacks* (remembrances of my father's usage), or *Chicanos* for the "Mexicans". Although the term *Chicano* in itself stemmed

from the recent *Chicano Movement*, in association with political activist César Chavez, these new friends taught me to use these terms in pejorative ways.

For instance, Spanish class at the junior high school was torturous for me. Being told I had to learn this language made no sense to my way of thinking. This triggered my rebellious attitude and in turn, my lack of cooperation with my teacher, who happened to be my first dark-skinned Latino instructor. While looking back on this situation, I do not think I personally hated or despised this man for being dark per se, but he represented an activity I found useless. Thus, behind his back my buddies and I always referred to him as a greasy wetback or spic. I was not interested in learning this torturous babble every day, but rather, I was more concerned about trying to be a young *hippie*, playing my guitar, impressing the girls, and irritating my father.

About a year after moving to California, my father's job moved us again, this time back to St. Louis, Missouri. At this point, my mother put her foot down, so to speak, and demanded he take no more assignments that would move the family. My remaining high school years were spent in the suburbs of this large Midwestern city, with its large Black population. Of course, my parents moved us to a suburban community to be close to my father's work, but it was also conveniently an all White neighborhood and my graduating class of nearly 1,000 seniors had only two Black students. Thus I continued living my normal life with other normal teenagers in a normal community at a somewhat normal school and coerced to attend a normal church; all was normal again. Life was so normal in this community that when one of my English literature teacher assigned a reading project on John Howard Griffin's book, *Black like me* (1961), parents and local ministers were instantly enraged and petitions circulated demanding that particular book to be cen-

sured and banned from the school. That incident grabbed my attention about racial matters and furthered my resolve to maintain separation based on skin color. I remember thinking as I read *Black like me*, how ridiculous for a White man to so radically change his appearance in order to understand Black people. What non-sense I thought! By the time I graduated from high school, for me, the racial boundaries were clearly drawn and I felt no need to cross those lines.

Born a Ramblin' Man

In the previous section I narratively described my childhood growing up in Dixie with defining racial encounters and southern cultural norms. I followed this with my immediate teenage departure from there into other geographies and its accompanying personal and social upheaval in my life. In this section I selectively examine defining moments of my acculturation journey as I continued my passage to maturity through continued geographical, cultural, and temporal shifts in my personal situation. This portion of my life's story does not follow the linearity of the previous passages, but rather it is complexly imbricated within itself. By this I mean temporal and geographical periods overlap simultaneously and may appear confusing to the reader. I will attempt therefore, to keep this section of the narrative discourse in chronological order, but movement back and forth may be necessary to fully explicate this portion of the analysis.

By the time Saigon fell to the communist regime of North Vietnam, I had been in and out of college, worked several factory jobs, and found my life spinning out of control with no direction. Although during my teenage years I had opposed the Vietnam War, I was not opposed to the idea of military service and my family had a long history of military service to America. When 1975 rolled around, I knew my passion in life was photog-

raphy and I saw a possible path to a lifelong career in this profession by joining the Air Force. Raising my right hand and swearing allegiance to the U.S. constitution at the military induction center would set into motion a series of defining racial encounters and cultural changes that would ultimately prove critical in my progression towards inclusiveness.

Flying to San Antonio, Texas in the summer of 1975 was rather uneventful, but in a few short hours that would all change. Darkness had settled in by the time Air Force drill sergeants had marched the new recruits off the buses and under the barrack's overhang. I was somewhere in the middle of these young men when I saw a door open with yellow light streaming out into the darkness where I stood. Next came the silhouette of my drill sergeant with his distinctive "Smokey Bear" hat; but wait, there was something else that caught my attention and immediately put me in distress. I could clearly see an *Afro* hairstyle beneath that hat and then he started his verbal assault and I knew life had just turned to a living hell for the next several weeks, as he had the ubiquitous Southern accent of a *Black* man. My heart stood still. "What have you gotten yourself into Ownby," I thought. From that point forward during the next four years, I had Black men as my supervisors and to my surprise, they taught me greatly about life and its inequalities. However, my military experience continued on past those initial first four years of active duty in the Air Force and included more than 23 years of combined service in the Air Force Reserve, the Naval Reserve, and the Army National Guard. All the while during those ensuing years, my interactions with the Other continued and slowly I began to change from those early childhood notions of what was normal in life.

The decade of the 1980s, which corresponds in part with my *Wunderkammer* photographs of graduate school and military, was a turbulent time of endless motion: several geographical moves, job changes, attending different colleges, and familial stress that ended a 12-year marriage. After my discharge from the Air Force, I entered the university and simultaneously enlisted in the Naval Reserve with my best friend. During that time my world returned to one of whiteness. Upon graduation a large advertising agency in southwest Missouri recruited me and of the 125 employees and all their various clients, that world was white as well. It was not until mid-decade, when my life seemingly fell apart due to my divorce, that I found myself back in St. Louis and working in the heart of the city. Here I encountered numerous Blacks, but none in any professional positions as myself. I enrolled in an evening graduate program and was suddenly integrated with numerous Blacks from various professional careers. I became friends with some of these folks for the duration of my studies. This provided for me a different perspective, as most of my encounters with Blacks prior to this, outside of the military, had been of workers in menial positions. These were new twists and turns to my outlook on the roles *minorities* could have in society. By the end of the decade I had finished graduate school and had accepted a senior photography position with a food company up north, in Wisconsin.

I moved to southern Wisconsin with the thought of only being there a few years and moving on to advance my career. Instead, I stayed for 13 years, what a surprise! The decade of the 1990s proved to be a mix of integration with the Other vis-à-vis the Army National Guard that I had recently transferred into after moving north; yet there was segregation from the Other in my private and professional life. I look back over that period of time and I see regression in my acculturation journey in part due to cultural isolation in

the small rural town along the Wisconsin-Illinois border where I lived and the lack of Blacks in my workplace. Of the nearly 1,200 full-time employees at my company, there were no Blacks within any of the managerial or technical positions. As a matter of fact, I only recall seeing Black or Hispanic workers arrive as seasonal part-time helpers in the distribution center and they were being bused in from Illinois and Iowa. On some cognitive level, I observed this inconsistency and recognized that even in the North the dominant group sought to maintain its homogenous normality. Once I made this observation to myself; I remember thinking that maybe this whole business of racial segregation and racial bigotry was not something unique and endemic to my Southern upbringing, that maybe this was a pandemic social condition throughout America. But, the 1990s were a time of cognitive dissonance for me as I struggled with my understanding of race relations and a number of defining moments from that time period come to mind.

The first two vignettes occurred during the winter of 1992 while serving with the Wisconsin Army National Guard. My orders had taken me on my last overseas tour-of-duty in Panama's west-central interior and to a small town called Santiago. While there, I had the opportunity to interact with a number of different cultures and ethnicities. This interaction not only included the indigenous rural Panamanians, but also my fellow soldiers: Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans.

My team of four photojournalists (*gringos* from Wisconsin) shared a large tent with about 20 Puerto Ricans. Since we gringos were the minority in this situation, our Puerto Rican cohorts quickly absorbed and sensitized us into their culture, e.g., loud salsa music every morning followed by fresh coconuts, which the local mestizo (mixed Amer-

indian and white) boys brought to the parameter wire in exchange for chocolate or MREs (meals-ready-to-eat).

But two incidents stand out vividly in my memory. One involved a fellow soldier and the other was a very old Panamanian. The first story involved my friend and fellow soldier, whom I will call Ben *Gray Wolf*, an Oneida Indian from northern Wisconsin. During some downtime from our Army mission, he and I managed to get away to a local market frequented by *Cuna* Indians from the San Blas Archipelago. These Indians are famous for their handcrafted *molas* and flutes. The Army had briefed us on certain cultural issues, such as not photographing the *Cuna*, as they viewed that as stealing their soul, so to speak. I kept my cameras put away. The main point in this story however is Ben. His wife, who was White, had been initiated into his tribe and she collected flutes from around the world. Ben picked up a lovely handcrafted flute from a vendor and started playing a haunting Native American tune. Complete silence embraced the *mercado* when the locals saw this American soldier playing. Several of the *Cuna* Indians nodded to him or touched his hand and spoke words in their native language. I had been privileged to witness a cultural bond that transcended national boundaries and languages.

The second incident, and most personal for me, took place in the small village of Montijo. I was there to photograph Panamanian President Guillermo Endara. While waiting for his arrival, I ventured through the small village of pink, yellow, and turquoise painted buildings. As I walked down the dirt road, a small, dark, elderly man wearing the ubiquitous straw hat and guayabera shirt, approached me from the opposite side. When he was close, he waved his hand and plainly spoke "Mister, mister!" His English was so fluent it startled me. He asked if I would mind walking with him for a while, so he could

practice his English with me. He placed his arm in mine to steady himself and we proceeded to walk his village together as he told me his tale. This gentleman was 80-years old, he said, and had not spoken English with anyone in years. As a young man during the 1930s he had been a porter on a cruise ship berthed in New York. He loved the English language and told me our language was “beautiful” and that he loved to speak it with *North Americans*. In his opinion, English was far more romantic than French, he explained.

As we departed, he took my hand and held it between his two, small-shriveled hands and told me his name was Christopher Columbus and that he was named after the famous explorer. Then he asked me for my name and thanked me for spending time with him. As he walked away under the oppressive Panamanian sun, I turned the opposite direction with my combat gear and cameras and the sweat rolled down my face, thankfully, it masked my tears.

During this same period of my military career through happenstance I went to a local Civil War reenactment and met some of the men and women involved. Before long I was invited to attend a meeting for another organization these folks belonged to: *The Sons of Confederate Veterans* (SCV). This Southern heritage organization I found appealing and before long I was a devoted new recruit. At that time, one of the main thrusts of the organization was the preservation of the Confederate Battle Flag as an emblem of historical heritage and purportedly not one of racial hate. They were attempting through their national agenda to disassociate that particular symbol from perceptions created through the media’s depiction of its modern-day usage by white supremacy groups, such as the KKK. Believing this organization’s ideological indoctrination, I rallied to their

cause and over the next few years rose through the leadership ranks to that of state division commander. I was responsible for all organizational activities at the state level (Shaw & Massey, 1997): coordinating Memorial Day services at the nation's furthest northern Confederate cemetery in Madison, Wisconsin; taking on big business (i.e., Harley-Davidson) to honor the Confederate Battle Flag that had been part of their corporate identity; and representing our state at the national conventions held in the South. It was an exciting experience, for a while.

Looking back, I think my concept of Southern heritage and honor and its associated rhetorical symbolism bound up in the Confederate Battle Flag, was one of naïveté and self-centeredness. Yes, I was proud of my Southern roots and that flag, which has held personal meaning for me going back to my childhood, but I was blind to how so many other people in our country view that symbol, rightly or wrongly. I find it very disconcerting how hate groups have managed to misappropriate that particular symbol and simultaneously misconstrue American history. But I eventually recognized the reality of contemporary American culture and that what I did or did not do within the SCV would not change deeply embedded ideologies associated with that flag. So by the mid-1990s I let go of my leadership role within the SCV and settled into a new preoccupation: farming.

I had been in Wisconsin so long and had become accustomed to a broader and more liberal way of thinking, as compared with my years of living in conservative Southern states, that I thought my destiny was to plant deeper roots and stay there for the remainder of my life. So I found the perfect plot of land for enacting this idea and purchased a 60-acre farm in the rolling hills south of Madison and I established a wine

vineyard. It was around this same timeframe that I retired from the Army National Guard and devoted myself to my day-job of photographing food and my weekend job of farming my wine grapes. This became a life of seclusion for several years, which took me into the new millennium. What I mean by seclusion is this, my entire world and frame of reference had become as white as the glittering Wisconsin snow on a clear blue day at -20°F. In other words, my life found stasis in my deeply ingrained concept of normality. However, by 2001 my restless nomadic genes had kicked in and I needed change: winters were too long and cold, the day job was boring, and I needed a whole new shift of attitude. Fortunately during this time, a good friend who happened to be the photography chair at a private college in Denver had been relentless in trying to recruit me to the professorship. Timing was right so I sold the farm, the house, paid off my debts and left the white of Wisconsin for the brown of Colorado.

Academia's Siren Beckons

This section moves the narrative from the recent past up to the current present. Roughly corresponding to the photographic section of the *Wunderkammer* project called *Getting Comfortable*, this portion of the narrative reveals the most recent racial defining encounters and my acculturational acceptance and praxis integration within my current situation.

Colorado's brown was dyadic: the physical landscape was brown from drought and a large portion of the populace consisted of Hispanic brown. By this point in my life I had encountered Hispanics/Latinos during my military career, some I served with in the National Guard, while others were in far off countries; others I had noted via the media or encounters through menial jobs such as food service or custodial. What surprised me

however were their sheer numbers and the cultural impact I encountered in Denver. This would be my first time interacting with Others outside the safe territory of my military responsibilities and it left me nervous. When I say nervous, I am trying to express my unfamiliarity with the Hispanic culture and I had numerous Hispanic students at the new college where I was teaching. My concern was saying or doing something that could be taken offensively due to my cultural ignorance. As I noted earlier in this narrative, I had limited encounters with Hispanic individuals and now I was immersed in an unknown culture. I took it upon myself through self-study to learn more about this group of people to ensure I avoided any cultural missteps on my part.

Moving to Colorado in the early 2000s constituted major changes for me: a geographical return to the Western landscape I had encountered during earlier periods of my life; a major career shift from corporate advertising to education; and a migration away from an isolated, normal White environment, to integration with an alien Brown culture. However, similarities did exist with this last point regarding culture in that I felt I was witnessing acts of racial discrimination similar to those of my childhood in the South so many decades earlier. I am not talking about lynchings or other forms of overt police brutality, but rather, the constant harassment by law officers. Many of my Hispanic students would tell their stories of such harassment. This was commonly seen while I worked in downtown Denver as I observed that nearly every time a car was pulled over by the police, its occupants looked to be either Hispanic or Black. Such a case as this was made poignant to me midway through the decade.

In 2005 I embarked on this doctoral journey by taking a prerequisite course in multicultural diversity at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. At that time I was

living halfway between Denver and Fort Collins and on my teaching days in Denver I used the mass transit system for my commute into the city. I had quickly struck up a friendship with one of my bus co-riders, who happened to live in the same subdivision where my house was located. He was a few years younger than myself and physically appeared to be an average *White* male. After some time during our bus rides and discussions about his love for photography, he gave me one of his business cards for his side-business doing weddings and portraits. At that point when I read his card I discovered his last name was Hispanic. He explained to me his father's family was several generation Coloradoans originally from Mexico, which prior to the Mexican-American War of 1846, Mexico's territory had extended well north to include Colorado where his family lived. His mother on the other hand, was Portuguese and hence his classic European facial features, so he claimed.

Over several months I continued my classes at the university in the evenings and on workdays I rode the bus with my friend. Often times I would see him leaving our subdivision just ahead of me in his little, old pick-up truck on our way to the bus station. One morning in the pre-dawn darkness just as I rounded the corner at the bottom of our hill, I saw the ubiquitous red and blue flashing lights of two police cars blocking the path of a small battered pick-up truck. On passing the scene, I realized it was my Hispanic friend when I saw the spotlights shining in his driver's window. I went on to catch my bus ride, but he did not. That evening on the return trip he sat down next to me and proceeded to tell me the story from his morning encounter with our local police. I had heard from others that the local police profiled and targeted Hispanics in our town and this may have been the case in that incident. Part of the profile in our community was associating His-

panics with old run-down pick-up trucks, similar to my friend's. A single police officer had pulled him over for allegedly running a stop sign, but after he had my friend's driver's license and saw his common Hispanic name, a second squad car was called in to block his truck's path. They detained him on the spot for nearly an hour and fined him over \$120 for his alleged infraction. I asked him if he was going to fight this in court and he simply shook his head and told me I would never understand the losing battle he faced because of his name.

Less than a month after that incident I had my own encounter with the law in just about the same stretch of highway. Running late for catching the bus, I was driving faster than I should have, about 15mph over the speed limit, when those dreadful red and blue lights went into action in my rearview mirror. Pulling over in the dark on the side of the highway, my first thought was "Great, I'm going to miss my bus and be late for work." The officer approached my window as I rolled it down and while he shined his brilliant flashlight in my face, I fumbled with my wallet trying to retrieve my driver's license. In the process, I inadvertently pulled out my retired military identification card. He took my license and returned to his squad car to run my name through the database. Moments later he returned to me, leaned down and kindly patted my arm and said, "Sir, you really need to slow down a bit" and let me go. No ticket, no warning, no nothing. Later that very evening I sat in my multicultural diversity class and wondered to myself if the morning's incident was a case of white privilege or was it my veteran's status the officer saw when my fumbling fingers inadvertently pulled out my military ID card. Possibly a mix of the two; but, it certainly left me reflecting about how unjust the system was as I pondered my

fate against that of my Hispanic friend's. I never told him about the outcome of my encounter even though he saw me pulled over as he drove to our bus stop.

That particular graduate class on multicultural diversity, in concert with contemporary and historical personal encounters with Others, caused for me what I consider significant cognitive dissonance that resulted in a *great awakening* in regards to institutionalized and personalized ideologies that advance the benefits of the dominant societal group while disadvantaging and subjugating people outside that dominant collective. Shortly after completing that course midway through the first decade of the 21st century, my job situation changed and I relocated to Missouri to accept a professorship at a regional state university. This temporal and geographical change has given me an opportunity to critically reflect on lessons learned during that multicultural diversity class in concert with reflection on the numerous preceding racial encounters that evolved during this narrative. As I have continued through my doctoral course work over the past few years, the recurring theme of my studies and work has circled around racial issues specific to visual media representations. I find this notion important as I consider my role as a photographic media professor and as I search for ways to bring this to the attention of my undergraduates.

Final Thoughts

I find it hard to collapse over five decades of lived experience into a couple dozen pages of text. But, by deconstructing the textual data derived from the *Wunderkammer* narrative panels, field notes, and other artifacts, followed by reconstructing them into my introductory research poems and the ensuing scholarly personal narrative, I was able to do so and I concurrently gained a different view of my life that until now I had rarely

considered. The idea that certain institutions from my childhood, such as public school, church, sports teams and Scouts, could have played such an important ideological role in my self-identity formation was not something I had extensively considered. Certainly as a child I did not question the cultural structures and societal divisions being advanced as everyday norms by these groups. I unconditionally accepted the notion of White privilege and White supremacy. Society was segregated after all, and since the people running these organizations, including my own mother in one instance, were adults, they should know what was in my best interest. That was normal. Thus, these analyses has shown to me how impressionable my child-self was and it causes me to pause in contemplation about the ultimate responsibility placed on the adults running such organizations in regards to the molding of young impressionable minds in relation to societal ideologies being promulgated.

The building of cultural domains and taxonomies into various qualitative displays, has allowed me to recognize cultural attributes within myself as ideological themes emerged through this textual deconstruction and reconstruction process. Furthermore, I was able to recognize the acculturation theme premised on my personal defining encounters with Others as the central structural storytelling element of the scholarly narrative as set forth in this chapter. This particular aspect of the analytical process surprised me, in that I had given little thought to the inter-links and connections of racial encounters during my life and how they were simply not just isolated instances. Indeed, they have shown me how their contribution to my self-identity development have been essential to my overall acculturation within a diverse American society. Working in concert with these encounters however, are the aspects of temporality and my placement within human

and physical geography. Moreover, when I consider these elements within the scheme of cultural and societal changes during those eras depicted, I come to acknowledge and appreciate more fully Foucault's (1973) concept of *episteme*; the notion how any given society orders its thinking within certain historical instances. Therefore life, and my life in particular, has not been a simple matter of getting up each day and going through a ritualized process of mundane activities only to retire to the solitude of evening sleep. Rather, it has been an imbrication of complex geo-cultural and socio-historical activities and ideologies that have contributed to my personal acculturational journey and self-identity development.

In the next chapter I will conduct a Barthesian semiotic analysis of the *Wunderkammer* photographs of personal objects and artifacts as a means of self-identity construction.

CHAPTER FIVE: CRITICAL VISUAL ANALYSIS

Wunderkammers, Growing Up, and Visual Semiotics

At the outset of this chapter, which focuses specifically on the photographic images that comprise the *Wunderkammer* series, it is judicious to begin with overall descriptions. When critically examining photographs, Barrett (2006) suggested the critic begin with description, which means developing a list of facts about the subject matter within the image. That is, description becomes a “data-gathering process” (p. 16). Further, he argued at the base level of description, the critic is establishing a typology of the photograph’s subject matter, also known as *content*. This would be congruent with Barthes’ (1977) suggestion that “all images are polysemous” (p.38) due to their content and thus create a complexity for the visual reader when choosing which aspect of the photograph to read and pay attention to and which aspect to ignore.

The image’s *subject* is not necessarily the same as its *subject matter* (Faris-Belt, 2008), and the initial cataloging of the subject matter, therefore, is the starting point for any visual semiotic analysis. Operating at the first level of understanding is the subject matter content, which is simply known as denotation. The *subject* occurs at a second level of understanding, which is connotative, according to Barthes (1977). Additionally, Rose (2007) claimed, “many semiological [i.e., semiotic] studies therefore tend to concentrate on the *image itself* as the most important site of its meaning” (p. 76, emphasis in original). At the first level of interpretation of a photograph, the subject matter is addressed in order to develop understanding between signified, signifier, and sign, as typified within

semiological studies. Furthermore, Rose suggested within the semiotic analysis, the semiologist also needs to interrogate both the *compositional* and *social* modalities within the site of the image to fully explicate meaning.

As I stated in my methods section, there are nine photographs within the *Wunderkammer* series and they are grouped into three sections corresponding to my life stages, (1) *First Impressions of my Normal World* encompasses my elementary school years, (2) *Passage to Maturity* spans my coming-of-age years and then into graduate school and military service, and (3) *Getting Comfortable* traces mid-life transitions after career and military service to my current moment. I will begin by giving a broad overview of each stage, then I will follow-up with more descriptive detail of image content as I frame them within Barthes' (1977) notion of denotation.

First Impressions

The first three *Wunderkammers* in this series, which I call *First Impressions of My Normal World*, visually depict my elementary school days while growing up in the South. In order of appearance at my gallery showing, their titles work in concert with their content: *Little League*, *Scouting*, and *Space-Age* (see Figures 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, and 6a, 6b, respectively). Temporally, these three images span the years from 1960 until 1966, which was the year we left Florida because my father's job transferred him and our family to California. My age ranged from six to twelve during this period, which began at first grade and up until my first semester of seventh grade at the local junior high school. The *Little League* and the *Scouting* photographs contain artifacts and objects that could broadly describe many Baby Boom boys of that era, regardless of geographic region. Pocketknives and baseball gear, toy airplanes, snapshots of fishing trips and other out-

door Scouting activities, rock and stamp collections populate both photographs; these were popular pursuits for many children across America to engage in during the 1950s and 1960s. Activities such as these and similar ones marked and established American childhood.



Figure 4a. Little League Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Little League Wunderkammer by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>Growing up during the 1960s in Florida was typical for any kid of that era, provided they were White. By 1964 (the same year Little League Baseball was granted its Charter of Federal Incorporation by the U.S. Congress) I was in the 4th grade and actively playing on a local Little League team in Titusville. Within this Wunderkammer are my baseball cap, glove, bat, and team photo. I was No 4 on the Orioles and our team was sponsored by Shaffer's Hardware. My first season was spent out in center field and by my second season, I played the infield, 1st base and shortstop. Of course, there were no girls on our teams back then, and all of my teammates and opponents alike, were White. Yet from my perspective as a 4th grader, all was normal with this arrangement.</p>
	<p>Other items in this Wunderkammer include mementos from other elementary school years as well. The old banker's cheque from Brevard National Bank of Titusville for 28c was sent to me years after the account was closed. This account was part of a 1st grade homework assignment to teach us financial responsibility. Within this collection appear groups of pocketknives, beginning with the small green one as a gift from my father when I was in 3rd grade. The small specimen case houses my "surfer crosses" and other Maltese crosses; one from my uncle who was a U.S. Marine. The Mexican-style wallet with Aztec sundial and the postcard are remnants of my father's many travels out West when he worked on experimental military aircraft and missiles during the 1950s. Lastly, the specimen case containing the small colorful plastic airplanes were toys that I had collected as well as one from my uncle, which he had during WWII.</p>
	<p>As a 4th grader depicted within this Little League Wunderkammer, I had no concept of race, racism, or racial stereotyping, let alone that I was going to segregated public schools. It was just the way things were then. Often I look back on that age of innocence with a sense of wonder and it makes me contemplate how and why my parents dealt with these issues with an overall silence in our home.</p>

Figure 4b. Little League story panel that accompanied Figure 4a.



Figure 5a. Scouting Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Scouting Wunderkammer</i> by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>All my buddies at school were Scouts; so naturally, I became a Scout as well. It was the normal thing to do in elementary school during the 1960s. It was American. However, now looking back in retrospect, it was also all White. No Blacks, Asians, Latinos, or Indians allowed! I joined the Cub Scouts during the 3rd grade in 1963, which is depicted in this <i>Wunderkammer</i> by the merit badge record chart of the same year. I earned my first badge as a "Bobcat". By the time I became a "Wolf" and a "Bear", my own mother had become the den mother. Needless to say, once that happened many of our scouting activities were influenced by my desires and my pressures on Mom. I continued on through Cub Scouts until about 6th grade, when I joined a "Webelos" den. I never made it into the ranks of the Boy Scouts because my father's job kept us moving from state to state. We left Titusville, Florida for St. Louis, Missouri, where Dad's job in aerospace was headquartered, and then out to Santa Maria, California. By then I was in 8th grade and I was caught up in the "hippie" phenomenon and of course the Boy Scouts were not cool and it certainly represented the "Establishment"!</p>
	<p>Other aspects of this <i>Wunderkammer</i> include various collections that were so typical of that era. These include rather innocuous artifacts such as stamps, arrowheads, and rocks. However now, looking back at the arrowhead collection, which was gathered through swapping, buying, and digging, I'm bothered by the lack of respect shown for the First Nation citizens of this country. Also, when looking at this image I see my fascination with Native American culture through simple childhood items such as the totem pole neckerchief slide, the souvenir tomahawk from the Smokey Mountains, and the ubiquitous "cowboy" bolo tie.</p>
	<p>The last item of interest in this <i>Wunderkammer</i> is the family snapshot when I was 12 standing next to my father with a stringer of trout. My mother snapped this picture in 1966 when our family went camping from Florida to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Of course on this trip I collected more Western artifacts contributing more to my gaze toward Native American culture.</p>

Figure 5b. Scouting story panel that accompanied Figure 5a.



Figure 6a. Space-Age Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Space-Age Wunderkammer by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>The whole reason our family moved to Florida in 1960 was because of my father's job, which was in the aerospace industry. The U.S. race for space is the theme of this Wunderkammer. During the late 1950s the Soviet Union had successfully launched Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth. This techno feat by the "Commies" helped seal this nation's xenophobia, which had been fueled by McCarthyism during the preceding years prior to my birth. All this Communist witch-hunt had set into motion the activities with my father's job that took our family from Missouri to New Mexico (White Sands Missile Range) and on to Cape Canaveral and Titusville, Florida. There we would stay for the next 7 years while Dad helped to launch America's original seven astronauts that had the "right stuff".</p>
	<p>Dad worked every day with all seven astronauts: Alan Shephard, Virgil "Gus" Grissom, John Glenn, Gordon Cooper, Walter Schirra, Jr., Donald Slayton, Scott Carpenter. These space pioneers were all part of the Mercury and Gemini space programs, which is where my Dad trained these men to use their radar, radio, and communication gear in their space capsules. Relics and artifacts from my father's first-hand experience are what contribute to this Wunderkammer. The black-and-white glossy photos were given to my Dad during his work with the space program. The rocket launch photos depict the very first U.S. manned launch with Alan Shephard's Freedom 7 sitting atop a Redstone rocket, followed by Gus Grissom's Liberty Bell 7 on top of an Atlas rocket booster. The 8x10 glossy photo in the center depicts one of the teams with Gordon Cooper (Faith 7), John Glenn (Friendship 7), and Gus Grissom (later killed in Apollo 1 fire) kneeling in the front row, while my father is standing at the end of the back row, far left.</p>
	<p>The display case holds my father's launch pad access badges, while the grade school papers from 1965 reflect my intense interest in space exploration. In the center of the composition is a stamped envelope that is post marked "First day of issue" commemorating Project Mercury and dated February 02, 1962. Not related to space travel at all are childhood trinkets that my classmates and I collected and swapped at school during the 1960s. They were known as Rat Finks. These curious toys were a holdover from the Rat Pink cartoons of the 1950s and part of the hot rod car culture out in California.</p>

Figure 6b. Space-Age story panel that accompanied Figure 6a.

However, the third *Wunderkammer* titled *Space-Age* presents a different situation. While many American children of the 1960s were probably exposed through the news by mass media to our nation's race-for-space against the former Soviet Union, only a limited number of children lived close enough to physically engage this scientific and technological endeavor. Those were the children that lived in close proximity to Cape Canaveral and NASA's (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Launch Operations Center (Ryba, 2008, ¶27) on Merritt Island, Florida; and I was one of those children.

Nearly every artifact in this *Wunderkammer* speaks to America's early space program. The 8"x10" black-and-white glossy photographs are unique in that they are originals taken by NASA and U.S. Air Force photographers and were given to my father because of his job in that particular environment. The group photograph of men standing and kneeling on a rocket launch tarmac includes my father, along with three of the original seven astronauts of Project Mercury (Gordon Cooper [Faith 7], John Glenn [Friendship 7], and Gus Grissom [Liberty Bell 7 and Apollo 1, in which he was killed in an on-board fire]). The collection of three badges in the specimen display case in the upper right corner was my father's, which gave him access to the various rocket launch facilities where he worked. Hand-written papers along the bottom of the photograph were various elementary school assignments I had written, specifically about the space program.

Thus, these particular artifacts move this specific image out of the ordinary and become extraordinary from other American boys and girls who lived outside the rural Atlantic coast of east-central Florida. Other artifacts in this particular image are not directly related to the space program, but were objects collected during this timeframe and represent childhood mementos, such as the display case of pop culture trinkets known as

Rat Finks, often traded among boys playing on the school yard or during our bus ride to and from school. The upper left corner holds hand-painted clay figurines of American Indians around a campfire (toys passed on from my uncle's childhood) and interspersed throughout the remaining areas of the photograph are other simple childhood toys and good-luck charms.

Passage to Maturity

The next group of three *Wunderkammers* I call my *Passage to Maturity* and they encompass my teenage years from the late 1960s and well into my 30s during the 1980s. Here, the *Wunderkammers* include *Hippie*, *Grad School*, and *Military* (Figures 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, and 9a, 9b, respectively), in which the titles alone present incongruously juxtaposed presuppositions. This portion of my personal journey of identity and acculturation took many twisted turns, which have contributed to an interesting life, to say the least.

Hippie Wunderkammer depicts my teenage years during a turbulent historical period, which included portions of the *Civil Rights Movement*, the rise of hippie counter-culture, the *Summer of Love* and *Woodstock* (the original in 1969), the Vietnam War, and plenty of rock-n-roll music, including music of the Southern Rock Movement (Butler, 1999; Ted Ownby, 1997). Within this *Wunderkammer* are artifacts from my teens, yet they are dialectically ubiquitous of both the peace and love longhaired hippie and the rough potential "hell-raising" white male, stereotype from the South. Additionally, this photograph depicts the leaving of my childhood home in the South and moving across the



Figure 7a. Hippie Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Hippie Days <i>Wunderkammer</i> by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>Coming of age in the late 1960s was an interesting affair. By the summer of 1968 we left my childhood home of Florida for the sunny West Coast...California Dream'n and I wish they all could be California girls played over in my mind making that trip out West. Surfboards, long hair, psychedelic rock, and love beads (the love beads I picked up at a head shop in the famous Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco the year following the Summer of Love), all became my focus of attention. Strawberry Alarm Clock's one-hit-wonder, <i>Incense and Peppermints</i> was still rocking the chart when I arrived in sunny Santa Maria.</p>
	<p>Junior high school in California came as a big shock, after having grown up in the South with all segregated elementary schools. Here for the first time I encountered teenagers of other colors. People I had never really considered. This was my first introduction to Asians and Hispanics. Of course being a typical teenager I learned the local slang and derogatory terms for these "other" classmates. Regardless of an Asian American's origin, my teenage pals referred to all of them as Chinks, while Hispanics were known as spics, wetbacks, or Chicanos. Although Chicano became popular during the 1960s as a result of political activism, my new friends managed to use it as a pejorative term.</p>
	<p>I remember sitting in a mandatory Spanish class with my first dark skinned teacher, Mr. Sanchez, hating every minute of listening to this torturous babble. I didn't hate him, I remember being ambivalent about him being Hispanic, what I hated was that my classmates all seemed to already understand the Spanish language and I didn't. I struggled with English, let alone a foreign language!</p>
	<p>This <i>Wunderkammer</i> consists of divergent artifacts. On one hand, there's the cool, hippie paraphernalia of love beads, music, and my rock-n-roll guitar picks. Yet simultaneously, elements of my Southern upbringing appear in the form of the belt-buckle, the Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey label, and the family vacation snapshot on my uncle's boat, with his Confederate battle flag centered in the shot. Such dialectical forces at play in this <i>Wunderkammer</i>!</p>

Figure 7b. Hippie story panel that accompanied Figure 7a.



Figure 8a. Grad School Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Grad School <i>Wunderkammer</i> by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>Pipes, cigars, and tobacco were items of fascination during my graduate school days and are the primary focus in this <i>Wunderkammer</i>. Growing up in the South during the 1960s certainly influenced my thinking about smoking. My father and his father smoked. All my relatives from Tennessee to Florida smoked, mostly cigarettes, which I only tried in passing. My favorite uncle in Tennessee smoked cigars and I remember that smell very well. But what I most remember from my childhood days and what I think finally helped take me down the smoking path during grad school was the aroma of fine tobacco from a pipe.</p>
	<p>Many times during my childhood during the late 1950s, before we moved to Florida, I remember trips to Tennessee to see grandma and my cousins and along the way I'd see tobacco barns in Kentucky with their doors open, airing the dry, brown, leathery leaves. Sometimes along the way there would be Black sharecroppers working the tobacco fields and as a child I would think about how little had changed since their ancestors' days of slavery prior to the Civil War. Once as a teenager I went to Kentucky one winter with my best friend to his grandparents farm. They were tobacco farmers. The old man handed me a long, twisted plug of tobacco he had cured and insisted I take a "chew"...only to laugh himself to tears watching me turn green from biting and accidentally swallowing that evil substance!</p>
	<p>In this <i>Wunderkammer</i>, the large specimen case holds several matchbooks that my father collected on his many travels out West as a military contractor. They date mostly from the 1950s and a few from the early 1960s. Often times he would drive out, along the famous <i>Route 66</i> and some of these matchbooks come from motels along that byway. One specimen case holds some of my pipes from grad school. I think back then there was this romantic notion that puffing a pipe while wearing a corduroy sport jacket with patched sleeves gave a scholarly and academic air to one's persona. Sometimes back then, I enjoyed smoking a good blend of tobacco and drinking a good brandy or cognac from a fine sniffer.</p>
	<p>On the other hand, for a more rugged appeal, especially during my military exploits, the cigar was preferred. During training maneuvers many of us soldiers would smoke cigars, thinking it would help keep the mosquitoes at bay. The black leather pouch in the lower portion of this <i>Wunderkammer</i> was used to keep a ready supply of pipes, tobacco, and cigars. Other items shown here include a pack of British cigarettes my father picked up during his travels to the Portuguese islands of Azores. Also included here are two of my father's old lighters, which he used back in the 1960s. Even though I came to my senses several years ago and stopped smoking the pipes and cigars, I still enjoy stopping at a fine tobacco shop and walking into the humidor to inhale deeply the aroma of many past memories.</p>

Figure 8b. Grad School story panel that accompanied Figure 8a.



Figure 9a. Military Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Military Wunderkammer by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>This Wunderkammer poses a dichotomy in my life. Serving in the military was the furthest thing from my mind during my teenage years, when I was trying so hard to play the role of hippie. During high school, many of my friends were drafted into the Army and found themselves being sent off to Vietnam, a proposition I didn't like at all. My senior year I dodged the draft bullet when my lottery number came in higher than the cut-off for that draft round. Even though I appeared to be "anti-establishment" my deep ancestral roots of military service to America eventually pulled me to duty (my Ownby ancestors served in every conflict since the American Revolution).</p>
	<p>Depicted in this Wunderkammer are military artifacts that chronicle my journeys and adventures, which spanned over 22 years. At first glance, the mix of Air Force, Navy, and Army paraphernalia may be confusing, but I served in all three branches, received honorable discharges from each and eventually retired as an Army Master Sergeant (E-8). In 1975, just 3 1/2 months after the fall of Saigon, I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, hoping to be a photographer. Instead, they decided I would be a nuclear missile technician and sent me to Montana's Minute Man III missile fields. My time in the Air Force was certainly one of personal growth, especially since all my supervisors were Black. This challenged the racist thinking of my Southern youth and my thinking began to lean towards more inclusion.</p>
	<p>After my discharge from active duty in 1980, I entered the photography program at Missouri State University. Simultaneously, a friend wrangled me into joining the Naval Reserve with him, with hopes of sailing the Mediterranean Sea. Instead, I spent my summer in dry-dock at San Diego's 32nd Street Naval Station. Eventually I sailed large portions of the Pacific Ocean with tours of duty ranging from Nicaragua to Hawaii.</p>
	<p>Through job moves in my civilian life, I joined the Army National Guard, where I would spend the remaining 10 years of my career. I served in both the Wisconsin and Minnesota army guards. This experience was some of the best and most rewarding. I was chief photo-journalist for a mobile public affairs detachment and accomplished missions at the Pentagon, Gettysburg National Battle Field, and the ski slopes of Vermont. But most gratifying were my two tours of duty in Panama, with one taking part in "mop-up" missions after Operation Just Cause. We were scheduled to deploy to Iraq during the Persian Gulf War, commonly called Operation Desert Storm, but the war ended so quickly we received stand-down orders and didn't deploy. Eventually, I found myself serving in the infantry, managing public affairs for the 32nd Separate Infantry Brigade and the 34th Infantry Division. I was on a fast-track for the rank of Sergeant Major, but while on a training mission I ruptured a disc in my back, eventually forcing me to retire from something for which I had a deep love and commitment. Thus, I salute all those who proudly serve our nation by wearing one of its military uniforms.</p>

Figure 9b. Military story panel that accompanied Figure 9a.

continent to central California in 1968 where I was introduced to the *hippie* counter-culture. Displayed along the right side of the composition are my *love beads* that I acquired in San Francisco at a *head shop* in the well-known *Haight-Ashbury district* (home to such notable rock musicians as *Janis Joplin*, *Jimi Hendrix*, *Jefferson Airplane*, and the *Grateful Dead*). Old guitar picks and some of my hand-written sheets of music continue the rock music theme of the late 60s and early 70s. Along the left side of the image is a series of snapshots and other ephemeral artifacts documenting my need to stay connected to my Southern roots via summer vacations and water skiing with the *Confederate* battle flag on my uncle's boat in Tennessee, facial hair styles ubiquitous of many Southern men, and a label from the ever popular king of Southern whiskey—Jack Daniel's sour mash.

Advancing next to the *Grad School Wunderkammer*, the contents of this image encompass multiple generations and span several years. The display case on the left is of central concern since it contains my Dutch and Italian briar smoking pipes. Most were collected during graduate school while living in St. Louis, Missouri, during the mid-1980s, but a couple date back to 1975, when I first entered military service. To the immediate right of the pipe collection is a larger display containing several old matchbooks from hotels, motels, and restaurants. My father collected these during the 1950s when he traveled for his employer, with most of his destinations being in southern California. Some of these matchbooks came from establishments along the original American highway known as *Route 66*. Although I was never a cigarette smoker, my father was for more than 40 years and included in this photograph are two of his stainless steel cigarette lighters. The packet of *Senior Service* cigarettes he brought back from one of his many

trips to the Portuguese *Azore Islands*, again for his military related business trips. Simultaneously while in graduate school, my military career continued and other paraphernalia such as the black leather tobacco pouch, cigar and cigar cutter (sometimes called a *guillotine*), evolved from that period as well.

The last image of the *Passage to Maturity* section is the *Military Wunderkammer*. This portion of my journey began when I was 20-years of age, in 1975, and spans the ensuing 23 years. Artifacts, snapshots, and mementos in this image represent a unique accomplishment, in that I served in all three branches of the United States military: Air Force, Navy, and Army. Beginning in order of my military service, the bottom portion of the image contains elements from my years serving in the nuclear missile fields of the Air Force during the height of the *cold war era*. These items are cloth emblems of my rank, name and branch of service tapes, and my missileman's badge. Additional items include Air Force medals (Air Force Good Conduct and Air Reserve Forces Meritorious Service), and various Air Force identification badges for my eventual work as a military photographer. The upper left corner of the *Wunderkammer* contains two distinctive patches from my naval reserve service: one for my naval rank as a *Photographer's Mate Third Class* and the other was my Pacific Fleet ship's patch for the *U.S.S. Okinawa*. The bulk of the remaining items in this photograph depict my last ten years of military experience while serving in the Army National Guard for both Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Artifacts depicting my Army experience were acquired between 1988 and 1998. The display case with green felt lining in the upper right section of the *Wunderkammer* image holds my military ribbons, most are Army decorations with a few Air Force representations from earlier in my military career. The other display, which is more centered in

the image, holds four military *coins*. The two coins at top are my *challenge coins* from the 32nd “Red Arrow” Separate Infantry Brigade and the 34th “Red Bull” Infantry Division. *Challenge coins* were used to prove organization membership and typically if a soldier did not have his or her coin in their possession when challenged, they could be ordered to perform such tasks as doing push-ups or buying a round of beer. The large coin at the bottom of the case bearing the red flag was given by the Honorable *Togo D. West, Jr.*, the first African American Secretary of the Army, for my completion of the Army’s first course in advanced public affairs for the 21st century after the *Persian Gulf War* with Iraq. In the center of the display is the coin given to me by the department of Missouri Veterans Affairs during the military funeral for my father, who was an Air Force veteran with service during the *Korean Conflict*. The smaller brass medallion in the left side of the case was my military occupation specialty insignia of crossed quill and lightning bolt being pierced with a sword. These were symbols representing my skills as a public affairs practitioner (quill for print media and lightning bolt for electronic media) and the sword as warrior and soldier first and foremost.

Other Army paraphernalia scattered about the image include my Army dog-tags (colloquial for identification tags), ranger beads used for pacing and counting distance during land navigation, camouflage make-up kit, memo notebook and military map, pocket knife, P-38 can opener (for opening food rations), small arms expert marksman-ship badges, various medals, and photographic snapshots. The snapshots depict Vietnam era *Huey* helicopters used to ferry my teammates and myself to remote locations in central Panama, shortly after the capture of dictator *Manuel Noriega* and the wrapping up of *Operation Just Cause*. The blue shoulder patch lying on the snapshots was from the U.S.

Southern Command, headquartered in Panama, and represents the blue of the Caribbean Sea, the Spanish galleon used to conquer and colonize Latin America, and the red Maltese cross signifies Columbus when he first landed in this region (England, 2000, ¶2). This concludes the imagery comprising the *Passage to Maturity* group of *Wunderkammers* and now I turn to describing the final group, *Getting Comfortable*.

Getting Comfortable

This last group of *Wunderkammers* depicts major transitions and periods of personal change as they visually arrange the past decade and half of my life. In sequence, I will discuss the subject matter content of the *Farming Wunderkammer*, the *Artist Wunderkammer*, and the *Professor Wunderkammer* (Figures 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b, and 12a, 12b, respectively). These images visually cover years and activities that were overlapping simultaneously with the last image from the *Passage to Maturity* group, my *Military Wunderkammer*. Thus, beginning in my early 40s, the years from 1995 up to the present moment are represented in this final group of photographs.

The large display case in the upper left corner of the *Farmer Wunderkammer* photograph contains my hitch pin with R-clip that I used daily to secure farm implements to my tractor. Also in the same display case is my Swiss Army pocketknife and its leather case that was also used in my daily rituals on my farm. The other two display cases in this image contain the keys used for various locks about the farm and the other holds my ponytail of hair that I sported for a number of years after my military retirement. Several other artifacts and objects dominate the remaining area of the photograph. These include several snapshot photographs taken of me working on the farm and of grapes growing in my wine vineyard. In the lower right corner of the photograph is my *Felco* pruner and

	<p style="text-align: center;">Farming Wunderkammer by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>About 3 years before I retired from the Army National Guard and while I was still the senior food photographer for <i>The Swiss Colony</i>, I purchased a 60-acre parcel of land about 13 miles out of town. It lay on a ridge just north of the village of Albany, Wisconsin and was incredibly beautiful. After much thought, I named it <i>Six Pines Farm</i>, as my family coat-of-arms contains 6 pinecones on the crest.</p>
	<p>When I first began working the land, I wasn't sure what I would eventually raise there. I already had 20 acres rented to another farmer and he rotated cash crops of corn and soybean. At one point, I had considered starting a holiday tree farm, but decided the long wait for harvest and trends in the marketplace was too risky. Finally, after about a year, it became clear that the property was ideally situated for a wine vineyard and I pursued that notion with extreme gusto. Once I started teaching myself and working in the vineyard, I realized how natural it came to me. Often times as I worked long hours pruning and tying the vines I would think that maybe I had done this in a previous life...possibly in France.</p>
	<p>This Wunderkammer has 3 specimen cases, each containing items from my farming days. The large case holds my hitch pin from my tractor, which was an old, 1948 Farmall H. In the left-hand corner is a toy model of that same tractor. In the opposite corner is a snapshot of myself on the tractor pulling a tree planter, with which I planted 4,200 pine trees in one day. The small case holds various keys to the farm and I carried these with me every day. Of significance is the last case at the top center, which holds my ponytail. When I retired from the Army, I immediately went back to my hippie roots and grew the ponytail, a goatee, and had my ear pierced! Mid-life crises I suppose.</p>
	<p>The vice president of my area at my day-job always called me a gentleman farmer, but regardless, I loved every minute of it and all aspects that came with the lifestyle. I served the township as the secretary for the <i>Land Use Committee</i> and joined the local farmers co-op. Many of my farm neighbors were intrigued with my vineyard operation and would come help me dig holes for the trellis system. Often I would head into the village at lunchtime for a hearty plate of roast beef and gravy at the <i>Edgewater Cafe</i>, which overlooked the <i>Sugar River</i>.</p>
	<p>Going out to work on that farm was a meditative stress reliever and I could spend hours in the vineyard and not realize how long I had been working. During the summer months I would pitch a tent and just stay there for 2 or 3 days at a time. My life's pace slowed to match Nature's cycle and often I think it was the object in my life that kept me sane, compared to my stressful day-job work environment. But after 6 great years and 2 grueling back surgeries, I finally gave it up in order to pursue my lifelong calling to be a college photography professor. My first full-time faculty position took me from beautiful Wisconsin to the majestic <i>Front Range</i> of Colorado.</p>

Figure 10b. Farming story panel that accompanied Figure 10a.



Figure 11a. Artist Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Artist Wunderkammer by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>Art has played a significant role in my life, going back to my childhood days in Florida. Around the time I was in the 5th grade, I had an art project at school and we had to work with pastels. For my homework, I remember using those pastels to draw a large elephant ear (<i>Colocasia</i>) plant my mom had in the living room. I fell in love with the process of working the pastels on the paper and creating an image that somewhat resembled the real thing. By summer of that year, I moved on to oil paints and canvas boards and was painting ocean scenes. During a parent-teacher conference, my teacher recommended to my parents the possibility of sending me to an art academy. But, my father would have none of the art stuff, his son was going to do "man's" work when he grew up!</p>
	<p>Thankfully, I was headstrong and determined to keep art in my life. I continued painting and drawing through my high school years and during my early 20s I discovered photography as an art form. As an undergraduate I studied fine art photography, but in my program I had several drawing and art appreciation and history courses. After grad school and headlong into my photography career, I continued to find creative release through my art, specifically in my drawing and painting. Several semesters were spent in life drawing classes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While there I also took watercolor classes and immediately enjoyed that medium. It's still one of my favorites.</p>
	<p>During my years in Wisconsin I turned more and more to drawing and watercolors as my creative outlet. At the end of the day in my commercial photography studio, I had no desire to be creative with a camera. However, the graphite, charcoal, watercolors and ink all gave me creative satisfaction. My job had become so high-stressed I needed my art to maintain my sanity!</p>
	<p>In this Wunderkammer are various artifacts and tools used in my painting and drawing. As with my Farming Wunderkammer, one specimen case appears again and that's the one with my ponytail. These periods of my life overlapped when I retired from the military. When I was farming I grew wine grapes in my vineyard and here you can see its influence on my watercolor painting in my field journal, which depicts a single leaf from one of my vines. During this portion of my life, I took on rather eclectic characteristics, including my personalized jewelry. The necklace I crafted from natural beads I obtained in Panama, while the silver Celtic trinity knot honors my Welsh ancestry. Interestingly, one interpretation of the Celtic trinity is its representation of the goddess Brigit, whose three aspects included art, healing, and metalsmithing. I guess she gave me her first characteristic! Maybe my eclecticism harkens back to my hippie days!</p>
	<p>However, as with the other Wunderkammers, social concerns still arise. Reflecting back to my segregated elementary school when I first discovered my love for art and continuing well beyond my graduate days, other artists encountered during these time were all one color: White. This raises questions in my mind regarding issues of privilege between the dominant and the Others of our society. How far have we really progressed?</p>

Figure 11b. Artist story panel that accompanied Figure 11a.



Figure 12a. Professor Wunderkammer photograph.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Photo Prof <i>Wunderkammer</i> by Terry Ownby</p>
	<p>The journey to this <i>Wunderkammer</i> has taken more decades than I care to remember. Over half a century, give or take a few years, to be kind of exact. But this is where I'm at today, doing something dreams are made of and what I love to do...teaching my profession of photography at the university. If you've taken time to read the previous story panels for the other <i>Wunderkammers</i>, then you've probably noticed that my journey has certainly not been boring! Photography is my passion and it's allowed me to experience life in a way that's far from dull. Fine art, photojournalism, advertising, and food photography have all been passports to other realms, literally and metaphorically.</p>
	<p>Denotatively in this <i>Wunderkammer</i> are objects relating to my central aspect as a photography professor: Camera, images, awards, class records and so forth. Some items reflect my pursuit of the PhD at Colorado State University, while one specimen case houses my "daily necessities", also known as medications! How my commercial images as a professional photographer relate to my mass audiences via mass media comes through in the textbooks displayed here. Lastly, the small specimen case holds the creative inspiration of this body of work I call <i>Wunderkammer</i>: a Tazo organic chi tea pouch with label. To learn more of that story, you'll have to read about it on my blog.</p>
	<p>So, the objects contained within the frame are literal denotations of my professional and academic life. But when combined, all the <i>Wunderkammers</i> connote my journey of enculturation and my acceptance of diversity on numerous levels. Growing up in a racist South during the 1960s seemed normal enough. It's what it was back then, which doesn't make it right, it simply was. I won't lie, it had an effect on me and by the time I reached the years depicted in the <i>Military Wunderkammer</i>, I was rather prejudiced, if not racist. But, a number of factors have intervened in my life over the ensuing years. First I suppose was the fact that from the beginning of my military career I had African American supervisors, all of whom helped me to grow into the person I am today. Living in culturally diverse areas outside of the South certainly had an impact. Madison, Wisconsin—the liberal bastion of the North—certainly affected my viewpoint. But so did Colorado, where I had numerous Hispanic friends that exposed me to a different culture. But probably the most significant factor in my journey was a doctorate course on diversity, which really opened my eyes to my place of privilege as a member of the dominant society. Through that course and my position as a professor encountering students from around the globe and different racial and ethnic backgrounds, I have experienced major transformations. Am I perfect? Certainly not. But the journey continues and more <i>Wunderkammers</i> lie ahead on this trek waiting to be experienced and filled.</p>

Figure 12b. Professor story panel that accompanied Figure 12a.

sheath, which was used extensively in the vineyard. Three toy tractors can be seen within the composition. The small red and green ones were given as holiday gifts from some co-workers at my studio, where they referred to me as a *gentleman farmer*. The larger red toy tractor that anchors the bottom left of the composition, is a replica of my 1948 *Farmall H* tractor used on my farm and it can be seen in the snapshot photograph in the opposite corner. Placed beneath the red tractor is a copy of Gene Logsdon's (1995) *The Contrary Farmer*, which was one of my favorite collections of sardonic farm prose. Additional artifacts scattered within the central area of the composition include maps and hand-colored layouts of the farm, pages from my farming journal, my farm truck license plate, metal trellis wire anchor device, and an herbicide instruction manual.

The eighth *Wunderkammer* in the overall series is titled *Artist* and it begins about the same time as the *Farmer Wunderkammer*, just a few years before military retirement. Most of the compositional elements in this photograph speak to my eclectic artistic nature and my desire to pursue artistic endeavors beyond photography. This particular photograph contains only one specimen display case in the upper left corner and it holds the same locket of hair that was depicted in the previous *Wunderkammer*. Watercolor sketchbooks and paintings are among the dominant artifacts in this grouping, with the lower left depicting a young grape leaf sketched during a break in activities in my vineyard. The lower right corner of the image has some of my location watercolor kits and a tray used for mixing paints. Other objects within the image-frame include a number of rendering instruments such as artist pencils, paintbrushes, and various pen nibs used for sketching with ink. Centrally located within the image are two pieces of personal jewelry from that era. The necklace I constructed from beads obtained in Panama and contains a silver Cel-

Celtic *trinity knot* or *triquetra*, which was a common motif from the British Isles *insular art* of its post-Roman historical period. I crafted this to honor my Celtic heritage and ancestors from Wales and central England. Lastly, a singular smoking pipe appears in the upper right portion of the composition and it was my favorite to smoke while painting or drawing in the studio or *en plein air* (on location outdoors).

The final image in the series is my *Professor Wunderkammer*, which depicts my most recent years as an academic. Centrally composed in the photograph is one of my older Nikon 35mm cameras with its attached motor drive (a status symbol among experienced photographers). Remaining elements radiate around this defining object, which is central to my professional life and my personal sense of self-identity. Lying beneath the camera are pages of 35mm slides taken for varying professional and personal assignments. To the right of the old analog camera are two compact flash cards used in contemporary digital cameras to hold and store image files. Other items in this upper right portion of the photograph include various photo media identification badges and a first place award ribbon from a juried exhibition for one of my images. The display case in the lower right quadrant of the image contains various medications, which are titled on the small artifact label as *Daily Necessities*, as tongue-in-cheek rhetoric aimed at the aging process. Next are two books that reflect my interests in media education and how photographs are consumed through mass media outlets. Smaller artifacts are scattered about the lower portion of the photograph that depict tools used in my doctorate studies and as a professor: highlighters, red pens, sticky index tabs, and keys to my office and studio spaces. The ball cap comes from *Colorado State University* where I worked on my doctorate degree. Post cards from Colorado and Kansas are reminders of trips to the university. In

sity. In the upper left corner of the *Wunderkammer* is a large display case that contains one of my *class record* books used for tracking my students' daily attendance. Lastly, in the small display case is a packet of *Tazo Organic Chai* tea and its label that was attached to the teabag's string. The collection label placed on top of this particular display case is titled *Inspiration*, as this artifact played a critical role in the design and execution of the *Wunderkammer* exhibition. This concludes the description of each photograph and its contents within the series and now I turn to Rose's (2007) critical visual methodology in order to further explicate additional levels of meaning as proffered by Barthes (1977).

Critical Visual Methodology

Semiology lends itself well to critical visual methods as proffered by Rose (2007) and proves to be "a very productive way of thinking about visual meaning" (p. 103). From her perspective, semiotics poses three criteria for meaning making from visual images: (1) it insists on detailed image analysis, (2) the use of case studies, and (3) usage of unique sophisticated analytical terminology. By using her critical visual methodological approach to visual semiotic analysis, this method provided an excellent means for describing and "understanding how the structure of images produces cultural meaning" (p. 106) within my *Wunderkammer* exhibition. When considering her critical visual methodological approach in this context, there are three critical areas or *sites*, to consider when analyzing photographs: image production, the image itself, and the audience of the image. Further, she stated that in most semiotic analyses or semiological studies, emphasis on the *image itself* was considered most important for making meaning from the photograph. Additionally, since semiotics focuses on the meaning of signs and their interpretation at the connoted level, *compositional* and *social modalities* also play an important role in meaning interpretation. However, it is important to give some attention

role in meaning interpretation. However, it is important to give some attention to the sites of *image production* and *the audience*, as they do bring some amount of meaning to the images under consideration.

Creative Processes of Production

In order for a photograph or other visual representation to exist, it has to undergo the physical process of production. In the case of my *Wunderkammer* series, these images did not simply appear nor were they produced as domestic snapshots, but rather, were meticulously researched, planned, and constructed as part of my scholarly/creative research activities as a tenure-track photography professor at a Midwestern regional state university. They were also created as part of my personal self-expression as a visual artist in response to life situations, specifically, the death of my father. It was a personal cathartic process. However, as with any form of qualitative data, during the production of this photographic series I remained open to other possibilities, creative inspirations, and other life events that may impact a project of this nature. What I am describing here is the *social modality* as suggested by Rose (2007). Specifically in this particular modality, the notion of *auteur theory* (pronounced *oh-tour*), or the intended message of the visual image's author, suggests "the most important aspect in understanding a visual image" (p. 19) comes from its author's intentions. Although, Rose further indicated in recent studies, intentionality of the visual image's creator is of little interest to some critics. To the contrary, since the author and audience are one and the same in the instance of the *Wunderkammer* project, I argue this aspect of the social modality takes considerable weight and thus I will continue to explicate this modality further for my readers and viewers, thus providing a framework for their response to this project. Additionally, *auteur theory*

advocates the importance of audience members knowing whom the author of the work is, which further informs audience response to the work when considering the production of the visual image.

On my web-blog, I stated, “Inspiration comes to creatives using various guises” (Terry Ownby, 2008a, ¶1); this was the aspect of remaining open to creative inputs that might come unexpectedly. Such was the case on a late winter’s afternoon in 2008 when the initial creative impetus for this project presented itself to me through a cup of *Tazo* brand organic chai tea. After teaching my morning classes at the university and spending my early afternoon working on doctorate class assignments, I needed a break and brewed a cup of chai tea. As I sat in my study with warm sunlight streaming across my desk from the winter sun sitting low on the southern horizon, I dipped the tea bag in my cup of steaming water, holding it by the paper tag attached by a string to the sachet. This paper tag was finely crafted as though it were an old scientific specimen label and I found that characteristic to be fascinating, since part of my undergraduate studies included graphic design. My intrigue with that tea bag label proved to be a defining moment within my personal creative process that would eventuate itself as a public photographic exhibition.

Some months later near the end of the academic year, I came across a still-life photograph titled *Icôn I* that incorporated a specimen case in its contents, which was created by a French/Belgium photographic duo called *Parallax(e)* (Vuarnet & De Keukelaere, 2008). This image excited me and stirred my creative thought processes a second time and caused me to remember the *Tazo* tea bag label. By early May 2008, I started keeping a research and production journal for the upcoming project and here I made notes to myself about possible shot compositions and the story I wanted to express visually.

Thus, in that journal I stated this project would be a “series of still-life’s based upon different aspects of my life. I see this as a series of straight down shots in which I display various artifacts from my life as collections of scientific specimens” (Terry Ownby, 2008b, p. 1). The production of the images therefore, was created in my studio while pointing the camera straight down on the set of props. Furthermore, when considering the *technological modality* of this production, I used a professional grade digital single lens reflex camera, which is today’s counter-point to a traditional 35mm film camera. Additionally, professional lighting equipment was used in a way to provide visual continuity of light for each of the nine photographs in the series.

Roland Barthes (1977) considered the camera and photographic technology from a scientific viewpoint, which thus rendered the scene before it as truthful representation (Tagg, 1988). This truthful representation is the same in the present situation, however, some critics (Marsh, 2009; Trachtenberg, 2008) might argue since I used a digital camera instead of a film camera, I may have altered or manipulated the images afterwards via computerized imaging software. In the case of my *Wunderkammer* photographs, digital manipulation of the type leveled by critics of digital photography did not take place. Normal darkroom techniques such as dust removal and tonal contrast adjustments were used in the digital darkroom environment and nothing more; in other words, no collage or montage techniques for adding to or subtracting from the photographs were employed.

At the university where I teach, the photography program is not located within traditional colleges such as the arts or humanities; but rather, it is situated within the *College of Science and Technology*. As such, I went to visit my friends and colleagues in the earth sciences department in search for samples of old scientific labels used to identify

specimens kept in collections. They were excited about my project and were very helpful in providing samples to me from their assorted displays. Additionally, I conducted web-based searches of old specimen labels used during the 18th and 19th centuries. All samples were printed and cataloged in my research journal and from these references I designed my own label using computer image manipulation software. Creating these labels was both a technology driven activity as well as being part of my personal creative process. For me as an artist, I derive as much personal pleasure and satisfaction during the creation of art as I do from the finished work. Thus, through current technology I recreated specimen labels that had an old, vintage look to them and these were used throughout the *Wunderkammer* series.

For the final exhibition at the university art gallery, I needed to produce physical photographs that could be matted and framed for hanging. Since these images were produced using digital technology, the actual photographic prints were created using professional quality printers using an archival *giclée* process, or inkjet spray onto a substrate of white-buffered matte finished printing paper. Each image was sized and printed at 12" x 12" (30cm x 30cm) and then professionally matted and framed in 16" x 16" (40.6cm x 40.6cm) black anodized metal frames (see Appendix B). Thus, I have provided an overview of the image production site with a focus on the technological modality in creating the photographs of the *Wunderkammer* series. Next, I will discuss the *site of the audience*, followed by a detailed analysis of the *site of the image*.

An Audience of One

In discussing how viewers of images read photographs differently, Rose (2007) argued the environmental context of the viewer could alter perceptions based on whether

that person was viewing in a gallery or viewing a mass-produced magazine. This is where she situated *social modality* as being most important in how audiences understand visual images. She stated two criteria are influential in audience response to visual images: (1) the social identities of the spectators, and (2) the social performance of spectating. On the first account of social identity, I find myself in an interesting situation. On one hand, I have viewed these images from their inception as un-solidified, abstract cognitive constructs. Conversely, I have viewed each image materialize on the studio set and as final exhibition prints hanging in a formal gallery context. How do I separate myself as an audience from these different views? I cannot. At one and the same moment I am creator and observer, artist and art patron; an endless circle of viewing engulfs me as a revolving door or gate, similar in thought to the Roman god Janus of beginnings and endings, a constant cycling.

For this psychological exercise in which I am the audience, focus will be directed to that of art patron; how I reacted to viewing my show at the gallery along with other art patrons on opening night and followed by solitary observations later during the exhibit showing. Thus I am addressing the second criteria of social performance of spectating, or viewing. In this dissertation I did not however discuss comments and reactions from other art patrons viewing the *Wunderkammer* exhibit, as they are not within the scope of this particular project on self-identity. Therefore, the audience is distilled to one, myself, which is appropriate in the construction of my self-identity vis-à-vis the photographs and objects that lie beneath the magnifying glass.

The opening night of the show was combined with four visiting female artists, whose mixed-media show was in another gallery across the hall from the gallery contain-

ing my exhibit. As with social events of this nature, there were dozens of viewers wandering through both galleries, live music wafting through the corridors, and plenty of wine and hors d'oeuvres. Within this context, I did not see myself as a viewer per se but rather as an ethnographic participant observer. I was consciously aware of my work hanging on the gallery walls, but was more involved observing others reading and viewing my images as well as fielding questions from other patrons. Here is an extract from my field notes taken the night of the show opening:

Exciting to watch people in the gallery inspecting and *reading* my work. I found it interesting to observe how generational difference played on the audience's response. As I had mentally hypothesized, the younger college students (with their disdain for reading) mostly *looked* at the photos and pretty much skipped the story panels. On the other hand, older art patrons engaged both the visual and literary components of the exhibit. Received much verbal response from these folks, especially Baby Boomers and in some cases, Gen Xers. For example, one Gen Xer told me he remembered and related to many of the visual artifacts because he remembered them from his older brothers, which were Baby Boomers. (Field notes, January 14, 2010, emphasis in original)

Thus, during the opening night of the exhibition, my focus was centered on other audience members. As noted earlier in this dissertation, I have an interest in the generational differences in audience image interpretation and this venue afforded me the opportunity to conduct applied participant observation simultaneously of Millennial, Gen X, and Baby Boom generations.

On two other occasions I returned to the gallery to view my *Wunderkammer* show. Surprisingly, I did not take considerable interest in viewing and reading each image. This was probably due to the fact that for over a year-and-a-half period I had been so deeply involved in ideation of the images, creating the studio sets, executing the photography, and overseeing the matting and framing. Instead, I found myself more interested in absorbing the existential moment and observing the entire context of reducing 50 years of

my life into 12” square photographs of objects placed in a 25-square foot white and black sterile gallery environment (see Appendix B). On my second visit, I found myself alone in the gallery space. This was an experiential absorption of the collective environment: floors, walls, framed photos, narrative panels, ceiling, track lighting, signage, and quest register podium. Although initially the physical space for audience participation seemed sterile, once there alone with my thoughts, it seemed the perfect culmination of space and objects to induce observation and reflexivity. In my field notes that day, I observed that I “spent some time sitting in the gallery (*Wunderkammer* show) just absorbing the SPACE and how it worked with reflection and contemplation: quiet, peaceful, comfortable, organized, solitude” (Field notes, February 3, 2010, emphasis in original).

The center of the gallery space contained a sitting bench approximately 18” tall by 5’ long. At the beginning of the show, the original bench was made of natural colored wood (see Appendix B), but by the time I returned for my second observation, that sitting bench had been replaced with a very contemporary, sleek black bench that seemed to fit better with the entire show and space. Now the entire space was a repetition or motif of black and white: the white gallery walls, ceiling, and podium, juxtaposed with the contemporary black sitting bench placed in the center of the viewing space; nearly black shiny floor tiles contrasted to the multiple black lighting tracks with their black spot lights strategically hung from the white ceiling tiles; and the black photographic frames that encased white mattes that held each *Wunderkammer* photograph symmetrically and linearly placed on the nine-foot high white walls.

I have described the viewing environment for my *Wunderkammer* exhibit and revealed it to be a space imposing a formal reading of the narratives and images; this is the

technological modality. Yet, in this formal viewing space, the technological modality directly affects and imbricates the *social modality*. As Rose (2007) stated, this type of viewing space directs the audience toward a desired response and away from an informal reading that might include multi-tasking, eating, and watching television. Conversely, this formal gallery environment elicits contemplation combined with a thorough reading of narratives and images in order to appreciate and understand the critical nature of the material proffered to each audience member. Specifically, in writing about my reflexive response to my images at the gallery “in contemplative, reverential isolation” (p. 23) I am expressing the institutional ideological influence demanded by the physical space of the venue. Thus, I have described my “social practices of spectating” (p. 25) and how I responded to the formal contextual viewing environment imposed by the gallery.

On the other hand, Rose (2007) explained a second aspect of the social modality as being the social identities of the viewers, or *spectators*, as she phrased the terminology. Each person brings their cultural and social baggage with them as they enter the gallery to view the images on display. This implies different readings of the text and images, based on their mixed milieux of gender, age, class, race or ethnicity, among other aspects. In this particular case study, I am the audience and my personal viewing of the *Wunderkammers* was influenced by the collision of decades of modernist and postmodernist thinking, mixed cultural persuasions, and intimate interactions both with the artifacts and objects depicted as subject content within each image as well as the creative processes in crafting the photographs. For instance, when I viewed each *Wunderkammer* displayed on the gallery walls, immediately I saw the artifacts as representative of some detached yet interesting archeological dig similar to images viewed on a regular basis during my

childhood, as I would thumb through monthly issues of *National Geographic*. Rose noted gender and generational variations from different historical moments as significant influencers in viewing and interpretation practices among audiences. Based on results from a previous study (Terry Ownby, 2009b) that measured Millennial Generation students' lack of involvement with the *National Geographic* publication as compared to my generation (Baby Boomers), one could speculate notable differences in audience interpretation of the same set of images. But that is another study. Moving to the site that Rose considered the most important in semiological studies, I turn to the *site of the image itself*.

Images and Their Interpretation

Rose (2007) argued in making meaning from visual images within a semiotic context, the image in and of its self was the most important consideration. Additionally, she noted compositional modalities, as conveyed through the composition and arrangement of subject matter content, and social modalities were locations for meaning contestation. Therefore, this final section of Rose's three-part critical visual methodology, will semiotically analyze the collective data of image composition within the *Wunderkammer* photographic series. Here the Barthesian visual semiotic analytical framework of varying levels of signification using denotation, connotation, and myth, will influence this aspect of semiological understanding in self-identification construction through objects and images.

Since many domestic snapshots, whether they be of formal gatherings or casual family outings, are created by non-professional photographers and as such, the domestic snapshooters may lack formal skills in image composition or other photographic activities such as lighting. However, this is not the case with the selected photographs for this

present case study. My *Wunderkammer* photographic exhibit was comprised of nine studio still life photographs in which I brought to bear decades of formal photographic training and professional experience in their execution. As such, the subject matter content was approached with a formal mindset based on creative principles of composition. Each image was crafted using the same basic conceptual format: The content was arranged to fit a square layout with objects and artifacts arranged on a pre-visualized mental *grid*, which allowed for a structural flow from image to image within the series. Camera angle and lighting schemes remained constant, only the subject content changed and varied. Because this formal structure remained constant throughout the nine separate photographs, explication of meaning will be constructed collectively.

As a group, all photographs contain a common element and that is the usage of black scientific collection display cases, or as I prefer to call them, specimen cases, which were situated on a neutral white background. Each photograph has at least one of these cases within its composition of contents, and in many instances, several specimen cases can be found. Artifacts contained within the specimen cases varies between photographs with some items appearing benign, such as childhood toys, while other specimen cases pack polysemous ideological mythologies (Barthes, 1972), e.g., Native American arrowheads or sexist matchbook covers. Most significantly however, are the very specimen cases themselves. Functioning as a sign of science, each black case takes the form of signifier while its imbricated signified, or concept, directs attention to the scientific paradigm. Thus the multiple specimen cases visualized throughout each composition of the entire photographic series become discursive elements of the scientific modernist world in which I started my life's acculturation journey. In concert with the specimen cases are

specimen labels describing the contents contained within each case, simulating further the underlying scientific ideological scopical regime of the previous modernist era, or historical moment. Each of the aforementioned specimen cases are aligned with the compositional border of each photograph and oriented on the mental grid occupied in each image. This grid-like alignment of specimen cases further addresses rigid, unyielding aspects often found within this positivistic ideological discourse.

Conversely, remaining area within the series of photographs that is not occupied by the grid-like display of specimen cases contains additional compositional elements that at first glance appear in disarray. Moving from image to image, this apparent disorganization shifts about and within the formal border of the compositions; it is not static as it functions as a symbolic visual metaphor of my temporally shifting identities and changing geographies. This juxtaposing of formal scientific precision with that of an apparent “controlled chaos” (W. Geiger, personal communication, January 21, 2010) of disheveled compositional elements, works to establish a visually discernable dialectical tension between significant paradigms of modernism and postmodernism. On one hand my modernistic mindset wants to accept the notions of universal truths as established through science and technology, yet on the other hand, my postmodernistic thinking rejects the positivistic notion of universal truth in favor of multiple truths and realities as constructed within varying cultural milieus.

When considering second order levels of signification, or connotation, between signifier and signified, Chandler (2007) argued the consideration of *interpretive codes*, such as *perceptual codes* and *ideological codes*, would aid in understanding and interpreting the text at hand. Specifically he noted that ideological codes could address multi-

ple “-isms”, which included such ideological regimes as “individualism, liberalism, feminism, racism, materialism, capitalism, progressivism, conservatism, socialism, objectivism, and populism” (p. 150). Collectively therefore, the first three *Wunderkammers*’ explicitly or tacitly depict ideological codes directed towards racism, conservatism, and militarism. For instance, in the *Scouting Wunderkammer* the dominant compositional elements include denotative content specific to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and to my early participation in the Cub Scouts, which was for boys between the ages of eight and ten and one-half. Denotatively this image is composed of content very specific to my Scouting activities during the 1960s: Scout handbooks, Cub Scout calendar, neckerchief with its slide, first-aid kit, and various collections. We have to bear in mind however, that the technological precision of photography that makes the artifacts appear as literal, actually functions merely as a surrogate for reality as they are indeed, *analogons* of reality. This was a concern of Barthes (1977) when he stated, “Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect *analogon* and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph” (p. 17, emphasis in original). Hence, this particular subject content functions as the denotative sign that becomes the connotative signification of the Boy Scouts of America as an ideological apparatus of purveying dominant social attitudes of whiteness, racism, conservatism, militarism, genderism, and national religiosity.

Upon reflecting on these ideological implications contained within the *Scouting Wunderkammer*, I examined every page within my 1963 issue of the *Boy Scout Handbook* (Hillcourt, 1959), which occupied the central compositional and thematic element of the photograph. In this simplified content analysis of the 480 pages of my BSA hand-

book there was only one depiction of an African American, and that depiction was not of a Scout. On page 478 was an advertisement for *Aunt Jamima Pancakes*, which depicted the Black *mammy* that was so readily appropriated in American media stereotyping during the early- to mid-20th century. One other depiction of possibly an "African" appeared far in the background on page 24 where Scouts from around the "world" were depicted as being part of a "brotherhood", which also consisted of French, Arabic, and Indian Sikh boys, all of which were illustrated with Caucasian features. Even though the BSA claims (BSA, 2010) to have integrated Blacks into their organization from its inception in 1911, in the rural South of my childhood no Black Scouts were readily seen or integrated into our dens or troops. During my time as a Scout I was not even aware that Blacks were allowed to participate in the BSA in the South or anywhere else within the United States. As one of the opening pages of my Scout manual states, "Today you are an American boy. Before long you will be an American man. It is important to America and to yourself that you become a citizen of fine character, physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight" (Hillcourt, 1959, p. 11). To me, being a Scout was normal, it was American, and it was being White.

But the BSA of my childhood during the 1960s was not the only ideological institution of Whiteness that informed my self-identity; there was also the church and public school, Little League Baseball, and the early space program in which my father worked. Although two *Wunderkammers* explicitly address the Little League and the space program within their compositions, the notion of the church is implicitly imbricated with the Scouting organization. It was through the local church that I became involved in Scouting, as the notion of service to God was a tenet of the BSA: "Duty to God—*The Scout*

movement firmly maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God and gratefully acknowledging His favors and blessings” (Hillcourt, 1959, p. 345, emphasis in original). The BSA manual goes on to devote an additional three full pages to this notion of religiosity, along with describing 10 different religious awards and medals the Scout could earn. Thus from my perspective, the two institutions of Scouting and church, nearly functioned as one.

My childhood Baptist church was only a half-mile from my home and was situated in the rural area between Mims and Titusville known as LaGrange. Surrounded by stereotypic lazy Southern views of oak trees laden with Spanish moss, my church sat diagonally across the two-lane *Old Dixie Highway* from the historic LaGrange Church. That church was built in 1869, which was the oldest Protestant church south of St. Augustine (Brotemarkle, 2004; Manning & Hudson, 1999). It was at my segregated Baptist church that I learned about Blacks being subjugated into White servitude by the God of the Old Testament because of Canaan’s sin against his father Ham (Pink, 1950; Simkins, 1957) and thus their subsequent episodes of U.S. slavery and modern day segregation. This story was repeated numerous times during Sunday school lessons, Vacation Bible School classes, and countless sermons from the pulpit. Between the Scouts and the church, I was convinced that Whites were American, normal, superior, and should dominate Blacks; this portion of my self-identity was fully developed before my 12th birthday.

I noted at the beginning of the previous passage that the church as an ideological institution was implicitly connected to the *Scouting Wunderkammer*: I realize this notion is something many viewers would not necessarily recognize. This is the *punctum* that Barthes (1980) claimed, “will disturb the *studium*” (p. 27) of the photograph. The punc-

tum of a photograph is something different to each viewer and it is that visual and emotional element that uniquely speaks to one viewer and not another. As Barthes noted, the studium, which is the cultural connotations of the photograph, is broken or pierced by the punctum, “it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” (p. 26). The punctum of a photograph is individually personal and might only be perceived by one individual and not another. Such is the case of the church being imbricated within the compositional message of this Scouting image; it is something that may only prick my consciousness based on my personal experiential childhood reference to Scouting. In explaining how images and their content affected my self-identity, this notion needed explication.

But the church and the BSA are not the only ideological institutions found within the *Wunderkammers* illustrating my childhood development of identity. Both the *Little League* and *Space-Age Wunderkammers* contain compositional and subject matter elements that speak directly to dominant social discourses of that era: my elementary public schools, my Little League baseball team, and America’s military-industrial complex of space exploration. For instance, both *Wunderkammers* depict artifacts from both elementary schools I attended: *Bayview Elementary* for first grade and *Riverview Elementary* for second through sixth grades. Both schools were completely segregated during the years I attended, from 1960 until 1966. Additionally both schools adhered to a policy of morning prayer and Bible scripture reading, with numerous proclamations regarding segregation of the races and the superiority and purity of the White race. Thus the notion of a White superior identity, both social and personal, was not limited to my encounters at church or

with the Scouts, but as illustrated here, it was something that permeated my consciousness through nearly every childhood activity encountered in the South.

As with the BSA's purported integration of Blacks within the organization since its inception, so too proclaims the Little League Baseball (LLB) association (Little League Online, 2002). The first *Wunderkammer* in the series bears the name *Little League* and nearly half of its subject matter is devoted to my childhood artifacts representing my involvement with Little League Baseball. The baseball bat, ball glove, uniform cap (the "O" represented our team name, the *Orioles*), and the 8"x10" black-and-white glossy team photograph, comprise the LLB artifacts contained within the borders of the image. (As a side note, when clearing the contents from my deceased parents' house, I discovered a box in which my mother had neatly folded my entire LLB uniform: stir-up style stockings, pants, and jersey with its N^o 4 and *Shaffers Hardware* stitched on its back.)

These denotative baseball contents within the image represent the two years I played in the LLB in Titusville, Florida. Baseball was popular in my hometown, as it was in other communities around the nation, with organized men's leagues going back to at least 1906 for White ball clubs (e.g., *The City of Titusville Baseball Club*; Manning & Hudson, 1999), and the early 1920s for Blacks (e.g., *The Titusville Terriers*; Brotemarkle, 2004). However, as with many social activities in the South, these were kept segregated and even by 1964 when I joined the LLB, all our teams were White only. Thus, even my childhood pastime of playing baseball was situated in an arena for ideological contestation; as was the case in 1955 when there was a major rift in the league when a Black YMCA team was allowed to play a White tournament in South Carolina. As a result of

the Little League officials from the home office in Pennsylvania ordering the integration of the tournament play, there was a mass exodus of White teams that “formed their own program: Dixie Baseball for Boys” (Little League Online, 2002, ¶ 7). This *Dixie Baseball* offshoot still exists today and now is known as *Dixie Youth Baseball* (DYB, 2010), which serves as an example of commoditization of *Dixie* (Stanonis, 2008) as a brand statement of Southern culture and racist attitudes.

While the *Space-Age Wunderkammer* does not contain explicit denotative content that would suggest racism per se, it does contain visual references to White privileging within my father’s work context in America’s military-industrial complex that was focused on space exploration during the 1960s. But this theme of institutional ideological racial privileging through my father’s work experience is not limited to the image of space exploration, as it returns several times implicitly in other *Wunderkammers*. Specifically however in the *Space-Age Wunderkammer*, the large 8”x10” black-and-white photograph of my father and his work colleagues standing on the rocket launch tarmac at Cape Canaveral, depicts only White men. Many of our family’s social activities during my childhood years in the South revolved around the men he worked with, which included their families: bowling league tournaments, fishing and swimming at the coastal beaches, and social gatherings for barbecue cookouts. These were White-only activities.

My personal impressions were this type of work could only be performed by White men, based on this familial social network and from viewing mass media images of space program technicians working together to launch the astronauts into space. Thus as a child, the scientific and technological work positions in the aerospace industry were privileged, racist, and sexist; something I perceived as being normal. During those years I

never saw a woman or a Black person either working with my father (the only references he ever made to Blacks in the work place were of custodial or food service workers and never did he mention women at his work place during the 1960s) or in mass media images (i.e., TV news broadcasts, newspapers, or NASA films) of his work environment. In my child's mind this type of work was reserved specifically for White men and I personally identified with this concept, realizing that one day I would be a White man myself and some special form of work or job was reserved for me as well.

Collectively, the remaining images of the *Wunderkammer* series address ideological connotations implicitly, however, there are some explicit denotative elements that directly speak to second order signification. For example, in the *Hippie Wunderkammer*, there are three domestic snapshots presented as artifacts that elicit Southern cultural attitudes and racism, both indirectly and directly. Two snapshots denotatively are visual traces of myself, yet they connotatively illustrate Ted Ownby's (1990, 1997) notions of the Southern *hell-of-a-fella* and Southern rock music, which personified my late teenage years. The third snapshot is of a family vacation in Tennessee and it shows the *Confederate* battle flag prominently featured on my uncle's ski boat. As a child, and well into my early adult years, I was obsessed with all things Southern and Dixie, especially in relation to the Civil War and its iconic representations. For instance, from the years represented by the group of *Wunderkammers* I call *First Impressions of my Normal World*, I discovered other domestic snapshots and artifacts from our family home, which unequivocally illustrate this obsession. One snapshot depicts me in 1960 wearing pajamas and a child's housecoat with a Confederate battle flag and kepi motif, while another snapshot from 1961 shows a myself with a playmate wearing cavalry hats with Confederate battle flag

patches sown above the brim (see Figure 13). The other artifact was an actual fabric remnant from the Confederate battle flag housecoat (see Figure 14).



Figure 13. Family snapshots from the 1960s depicting myself wearing clothing bearing the Confederate battle flag motif, which Cox (2008) and Ted Ownby (2008) described as branding Dixie through Southern souvenirs, products, and services.

Note. To avoid confusion, the black-and-white snapshot on the right was taken around Christmas of 1961 (when I injured the bandaged finger), yet my mother was notorious for waiting years at a time before having pictures developed. This was the case here, where she waited until January 1966 (the date stamp in the left margin of the photograph) before having this film processed.



Figure 14. Close-up detailed view of Confederate battle flag motif cloth used in the above snapshot (Figure 13).

Although as a child I did not associate the Confederate battle flag with Southern racism and segregation, many individuals today appropriate that symbol as representative ideologies of racism, Southern cultural attitudes, or White supremacy. For instance, Patton (2008) in her visual semiotic analysis of Internet snapshots of Southern college fraternities' insensitive blackface minstrel performative acts, equated the appropriation of the Confederate flag as second order signification of Southern racism and White supremacy as being alive and well in the 21st century. Or, from Stanonis' (2008) *Dixie Emporium*, Glenn Eskew (2008) wrote about the touristic commodification of the *civil rights movement* in Montgomery, Alabama, and associated the Confederate flag flying over the state capitol building as indicative symbology of state sanctioned racism directed against Southern Blacks. Stanonis himself wrote about Dixie commodification through foodways in the *Jim Crow* South and its perpetuation in today's Southern society. Specifically he addressed this issue as promulgated by Maurice Bessinger's *Piggie Park Bar-B-Q* restaurant chain in South Carolina, which today, continues to fly the Confederate flag and sells racist literature in each store, as symbols of the South's *Lost Cause* for institutionalized racism (see pages 226 and 227). But as a child, I had little idea of the heated controversy over this historical symbol from our nation's past. It served as a touchstone and icon of my Southern heritage with a constructed innocence from my perspective of what was normal in the South and my lack of understanding the heated and contested ideologies ignited by this polysemous signifier.

By the time I entered military service in 1975, as depicted in the *Military Wunderkammer*, each military branch had abandoned segregation and appeared to be fully integrated. This certainly was the case of my initial service in the Air Force, as depicted

by the artifacts displayed along the bottom edge of the photograph. Although by my early 20s when I entered the Air Force, I had developed very racist and prejudiced attitudes towards minorities in general and Blacks specifically. These attitudes vacillated during my years of military service, depending on local situations and specific individuals. However, one aspect of military racism that created a sense of cognitive dissonance was evidenced to me during the 1980s when I served in the Naval Reserves. While Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics were readily seen throughout the crew while aboard my ship, the *U.S.S. Okinawa*, specific jobs such as galley service or officer stewards, were relegated to Blacks and Filipino Asians. The demeaning use of Filipinos in the Navy's mess galleys or kitchens and stewardships (i.e., men servants) can trace its legacy back to the Philippine-American War at the end of the 19th century. As Farolan (2003, ¶3) noted regarding Filipino naval service, "Most were assigned as stewards performing the work of domestics, serving as cooks and doing menial jobs such as cleaning up in the galley, the wardroom and living quarters of officers." On the other hand, by the time I entered service in the Army National Guard, integration of races appeared to be standardized, at least within areas of my direct observation. That is not to say racist or discriminatory acts did not occur elsewhere in the Army. I can only attest to my direct participant observations.

The remaining *Wunderkammers* of *Artist*, *Farmer*, and *Professor*, which comprise *Getting Comfortable*, do not contain denotative signifiers that could point to connotative mythologies or ideologies. Instead, from a sub-conscious level, the phenomenon of self-identity construction as it relates to the prior ideological discussions, was overtly focused on contributing factors such as my overall career and its associated jobs and personal pursuits as a maturing adult. Of course, one could argue that my advancement within my

military career and my professional photographic career was due to my being a White male and I have reflected on this notion over the years. In my progress to date however, I have been diligent in crafting my skills, expanding my knowledge, and availing myself when opportunities presented themselves. That does not obviate the fact that White privilege occurs in America and that I may have been its recipient. I can say with a clear mind, that I have not knowingly or overtly tried to capitalize on my White maleness. However, as I have described elsewhere in this dissertation, by the time I had entered into this current life stage, I had encountered numerous defining and causative moments that led to cognitive attitudinal shifts and integrative perceptions in regards to self-identity construction.

Closing Thoughts

Through applying this critical visual methodology to a Barthesian visual semiotic analysis of my *Wunderkammer* photographic exhibition, numerous cultural ideologies have emerged from the denotative artifacts, objects, and compositional elements represented therein, which tacitly have contributed to my personal construction of self-identity. By the time I entered the seventh grade in the fall of 1966, my identity of Whiteness as being normal had been well constructed through interlaced ideologies as indicated in the *Wunderkammers* comprising *First Impressions of my Normal World*. This was a critical and defining period of life and the imbrication of these ideologies was revealed through this semiotic analysis. I graphically illustrated this notion in Figure 15 as I mapped these influences on the self-identity construction of my childhood perception of normal Whiteness. Through an iterative process of description, construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of the images within the *Wunderkammer* exhibit, this semiotic

analysis framed within a critical visual methods approach, has developed numerous open and focused codes used to develop this conceptual map as they relate to the first three *Wunderkammers*. The ideological themes developed in this map continued forward in varying degrees within the remaining photographs contained in the overall series. However, the last three photographs of the series, *Getting Comfortable*, falls silent along these lines, as collaborated through my personal narrative in Chapter Four, because of cognitive dissonance created by my shifting social and personal identities during my mature adult years. Further explication will come forth in the next chapter where I focus on discussing the meaning of this research project and its future implications.

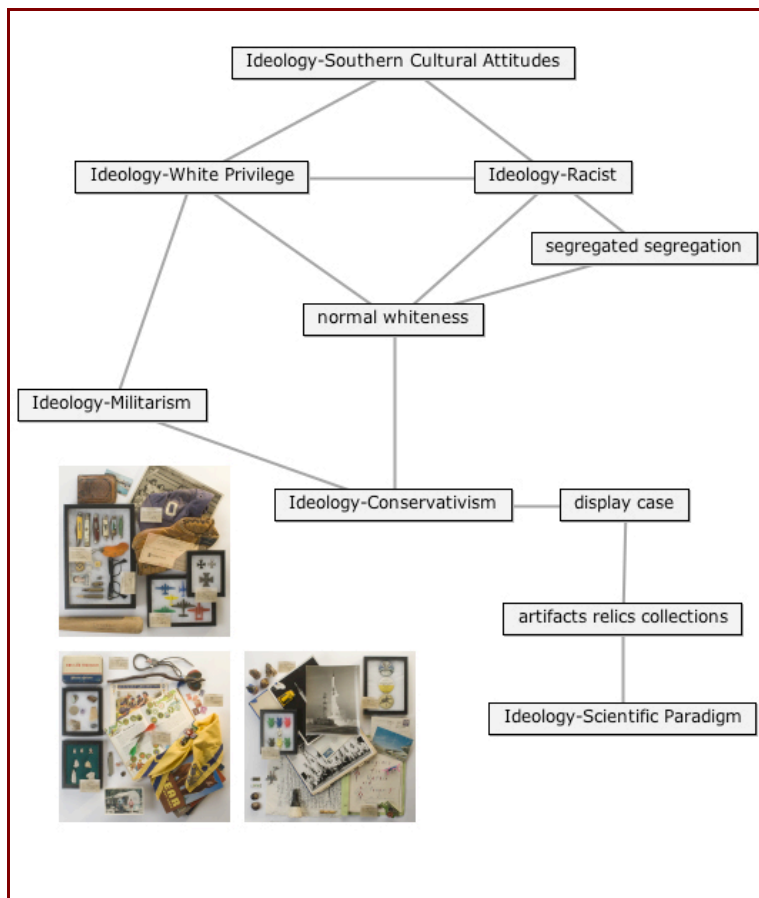


Figure 15. Concept map depicting ideological influences on early years of self-identity construction.

Lastly, Rose's (2007) CVM is premised on analyzing what she called "found" images. Typically these would be in the form of domestic photographs of such activities as family vacations, birthday parties, holiday gatherings, weddings and other rites of passage, most often found within the home. She also suggested that "found" images could be professionally produced work such as magazine photos, for example, pictures found within the pages of *National Geographic* magazine, that might be used in a content analysis. Her main point of focus in this discourse on "found" images is that the researcher doing the analysis is working with images the researcher did not produce, but rather ones they found extant within a particular setting. Other researchers (Banks, 2007; Pink, 2007; Stanczak, 2007) working with photographic images, especially in ethnography or visual anthropology, use images produced by informants or by the researcher in observance of their informants or participants. Specifically, Banks argued there "are two main strands to visual research in the social sciences" (p. 6). The first, he claimed, focused on the researcher creating the images, whether they are photographs, films, videos, or other visual media. These he further stated were used as a form of documentation of the social phenomenon under consideration. The second strand involved the subjects of the research producing or consuming the images themselves. Banks noted however, that due to the postmodern turn and its pronounced impact on social science epistemology, a third strand had emerged. This was about a collaborative synergy between researcher and participants, "both with preexisting images and in the creation of new images" (p. 7).

Conversely, in my current research I am extending Bank's (2007) notions above and those of Rose's (2007) CVM to include images produced by the researcher and the audience, which are one and the same. That is, I have personally produced and consumed

images produced by a professional photographer, that is myself, and I have not simply used found images. Additionally, my research not only analyzed the “professionally produced” photographs in my exhibit, these same images contained “found” images within the professionally produced images. Here I refer to the family snapshots and the professional photographs (i.e., group photos of ball teams, Father’s work environment, school portraits, etc.) that were used as actual objects and artifacts expressing notions of my self-identity. Thus, my methodology extends Rose’s original notion of how this type of analysis might be conducted. Serendipitously, she recently told me, “I’ve tried harder to put it [i.e., CVM] to work in relation to researcher-generated images too” (J. Rose, personal communication, December 3, 2010). Additionally in our email exchange, she told me how my research “came at a very apposite moment!”

Certainly however, I am not the first to apply this type of social scientific method to commercially produced photographs. Lutz and Collins (1997) did this extensively in their research on the photographs within the *National Geographic* and how the orders of significations set up the parameters for creating a national mindset that produced a silent overarching ideological attitude of White supremacy, privilege, and racism. Although, based on my review of literature, I have found no studies where self-identity was analyzed through images produced by the photographer, researcher, and audience, which were one and the same. Furthermore, I did not identify research that combined the CVM or visual semiotic analysis with ethnographic writing practices. However, what I have accomplished in my methodological approach situates itself in this silent area within the literature on visual methodologies and self-identity through objects, artifacts, and photographs.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND DENOUEMENT

In this visual autoethnographic dissertation exploring my acculturation journey of self-identity construction, I set out on a two-fold mission: First, I needed to explore my self-identity in relation to my Southern double vision through narrative text and photographs; and second, from an interdisciplinary perspective, to apply seemingly disparate methodological approaches in order to paint a complete and holistic portrait of my journey. My discussion in this chapter therefore, will be written in multiple parts. Framed with appropriate research questions; part one will discuss the making of my autoethnography using traditional ethnographic methods, along with research poems, and situated within the *three-dimensional space approach*, (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Ollershaw & Creswell, 2002) and its associated meanings. On the other hand, the second part will examine the use of critical visual methodology (Rose, 2007) to deconstruct and reconstruct my *Wunderkammer* photographs in a visual semiotic analysis to reveal underlying institutional and social ideological operatives affecting my self-identity construction in relation to the central question posed in this dissertation. Afterwards, I will discuss the meaning of combining the two approaches and their limitations, followed by implications for my own praxis as a photo media educator, as well as for those educators outside my particular discipline.

Autoethnography: Understanding the Narrative

Although I established a central research question and a number of sub-questions at the beginning of this dissertation process in order to establish an overall framework, some questions proved to be irrelevant while others collapsed into new questions. This is not surprising since Creswell (2005), among others (Maxwell, 1996; McCaskill, 2008; Spradley, 1980; Willis, 2007), has stated qualitative research is an emerging process and oftentimes inductively the questions may change or be eliminated. Such is the case here. While my question regarding the central phenomenon of this dissertation, which will be addressed later in this chapter, has remained constant, the sub-questions (RQ2 through RQ4) will be answered in this section of the chapter. As the data were analyzed and the results emerged, these questions became imbricated with one another.

At the outset of Chapter Four, I began with two of three research poems (see Appendix C for all three poems) that directly addressed RQ2: What was it like growing up as a privileged White male Baby Boomer in the South in relation to development of my self-identity? To answer this question, I chose the qualitative analytical method of poetry, specifically the research poem, to most vividly answer this question. Research poems (Cahnmann, 2003; Furman et al., 2006; Langer & Furman, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Poindexter, 1998; Richardson, 2000) are an excellent analytical technique for making sense from certain data; they can be “a very involving way to present an analysis of your work” (J. Banning, personal communication, December 14, 2009). In this particular case, the first three *Wunderkammer* photographs, their narrative story panels, and their associated field notes, specifically addressed my childhood in the South during the *Civil*

Rights Movement era of the 1960s and offered rich descriptive data that addressed what it was like for me growing up during that historical moment.

Following Furman et al.'s (2006) advice for constructing a research poem based on the French Malaysian *pantoum* as "a powerful form that can create a haunting effect through the repetition of lines throughout the poem" (p. 5), I deconstructed and reduced the data of my narrative story panels through open and focused coding to write the poems about the perceived normality of my Southern childhood. The technique of data reduction through this analytical method distills the data to their essence. In referencing Laurel Richardson's observations on qualitative writing genres, including poems, Miles and Huberman (1994) noted this analytical reduction emphasizes one's lived experience and how it could emotionally engage the reader by illuminating the core of the case under investigation.

Therefore, just as Richardson (2000) cut and pasted original excerpts from field notes to write her poem *Louisa May's Story of Her Life*, I followed her example in writing my pantoums. The notion of *normality* from a Southern child's perspective came through while analyzing civic and sports involvement in the Boy Scouts of America and Little League baseball. This form of analysis revealed not only blindness to White privilege and racism in regards to *Others*, but also blindness to a male-dominated, patriarchal cultural hierarchy of that particular existing social order. The repetition of the phrase *all was normal back then*, builds that haunting effect noted by Furman et al. (2006), in portraying my male-dominated White Southern world. Likewise, the repeated phrase *Within this Wunderkammer*, serves as a discursive link for the reader/observer between the written narrative story panels and their associated photographs containing denotative repre-

sentations of objects that form the underlying connotative ideological notions of that historical moment. In a reverse play on the metaphor of *unpacking* my knapsack of privilege (McIntosh, 2004; Middleton, Anderson, Banning, & Paguyo, in press; Zetzer, 2005) therefore, I was actually *packing* my knapsack during my childhood and unknowingly preparing for my life's journey of White privilege and the development of my self-identity.

Through the use of additional ethnographic analysis techniques such as focused coding, domain analyses, and event displays, themes and patterns emerged that I had not anticipated when I began researching and writing this autoethnography. At this point in my discussion I turn to the *three-dimensional space approach* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) and its application to these themes and patterns in building event displays that allowed me to chronologically narrate my acculturation journey of self-identity construction as a scholarly personal narrative (Nash, 2004).

Once the narrative story panel texts and field notes had been thoroughly interrogated, I found myself staring at chunks of disheveled data as though they were randomly strewn puzzle pieces on a card table. In order to make sense of the data, I created two event listing displays (see Appendix D) in order to understand its chronological flow. Miles and Huberman (1994) had some excellent thoughts about "events" within the qualitative study. Even though event listing is one tool among many for the qualitative researcher, I see it as an important tool and one that worked well within the context of my visual autoethnography. For instance, they noted, "Events long ago in time have consequences for the present" (p. 111). Thus, my narrative story based on the textual story panels from the *Wunderkammer* exhibit, chronologically follows "events" that I named

defining encounters: my encounters or events with people that were non-White. They also noted that working with an event listing is an excellent method of keeping the storyteller in line, in other words, telling the truth. According to these writers, “The event listing is a good way of guarding against false chronology” (p. 111). This is certainly of importance in my visual autoethnography since this section is based on a chronology of my life, along with local and global events. Use of the event listing method in qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to address problem areas when constructing the chronological flow of events:

- Sorting different domains of events
- Preserving the sequence
- Showing the salience or significance of preceding events for following events

According to Miles and Huberman, “doing all of this in an easily visible display that lets us construct a valid chronology” (p. 111) ensures the narrative story is correctly told for its readers. Therefore, I chose to create my event listing displays in order to navigate the data in reconstructing my personal narrative, all the while keeping in mind the components of three-dimensional space: *interaction*, *continuity*, and *situation*. Thus, in my event listing displays, I focused on *continuity*, as 10-year columns while *situation* became the rows, which considered my geographical locations. *Interaction* on the other hand, derived from the data, were entered into these matrices and it was here themes and patterns emerged as I constantly compared the information contained within these matrices, domain analyses, field notes and the narrative story panels.

During this aforementioned portion of the analysis is where racial encounters emerged as the overall theme around which the temporal geographies of continuity were

staged for writing my personal story to illustrate my self-identity acculturation journey. Therefore, this portion of the narrative explication addressed the remaining subquestions. RQ3: “What experiences and defining moments during my acculturation journey of self-identity development turned the direction of my life story concerning racial issues and shaped my cultural perspective?” is revealed throughout the plot of the story that focused on geographical changes over time as I encountered specific individuals and events. In his last work, *Identity, culture and the postmodern world*, before his untimely death, Madan Sarup (1996) addressed this issue of place and time as how individuals apprehend the identities they construct for themselves. Thus, with Sarup in mind, as I considered my different racial encounters over the course of my life within differing geographical locales, I constructed my identity in part, through my narrative story: “We construct our identity at the same time as we tell our life-story” (p. 15). He goes on to clarify one’s identity apprehension is always a relationship between time and place, or when framed within Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) paradigm, it is the situatedness in relation to the continuity of events. Thus, as my narrative story developed from the research poems, event listings, and cultural domain analyses, it serves as an exemplar of these notions proffered by Sarup or Clandinin and Connelly.

On the other hand, RQ4: “As my self-identity construction progressed, how has my perception of racial representations changed temporally?” is not revealed explicitly, but rather, more tacitly as an internal cognitive construct. In a reflexive moment, I questioned the validity of this particular question in relation to the current study. The phrase, *perception of racial representation*, is laden with connotations of racial stereotyping as often found within mass media visual images. During my initial literature review, I

probed racial representation (Hall, 1997) as a cultural framework and as a biasing agent, as revealed through exotic exploitative images found in the *National Geographic* and the lack of racially diversified imagery found in Kodak's *Colorama* during the 1950s and 1960s. Both of these mass media venues directly and indirectly affected perceptions (Hope, 2008; Lutz & Collins, 1993; Nordstrom & Roalf, 2004) for many American-born Baby Boomers, myself included. Implicitly, my response then to this question is yes, there has been change. Certainly as a child I was influenced by the *National Geographic's* ideological stances, as this publication's influence appeared to surface numerous times throughout my narrative story. As my narrative depicts, acculturation and self-identity construction evolved over the years from that of a hard-line segregationist as a child to one of diverse inclusiveness as a middle-aged adult.

The scholarly personal narrative I told in Chapter Four was composed using appropriate qualitative data analytical methods and framed within the three-dimensional space model. In doing so, I have addressed several issue-oriented (Creswell, 2007) subquestions (RQ2-RQ4) that lay the underlying foundation to my central research question (RQ1). In the following section I will address this overarching question as I approached it through a critical visual semiotic analysis.

Visual Semiotic Analysis: CVM Application

So the big question remains: How is self-identity defined through the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of nine photographic *Wunderkammers* and their accompanying narrative panels? This question is central to my dissertation and ultimately reveals itself within the CVM analysis conducted in Chapter Five, which I framed within Barthesian visual semiotic notions. By deconstructing each image and describing their

subject matter content as a means of data analysis according to Barrett (2006), I set the stage for what Rose (2007) called a detailed image analysis. Images and their analyses therefore, are important considerations concerning one's identity development and as Sarup (1996) stated, "There is no doubt that identity-construction is increasingly dependent on images" (p. xv). Hence, that detailed image analysis involved discussions aimed at understanding the three sites of image interpretation (*image production, the image itself, and the audience*) and their associated modalities (*technological, compositional, and social*) for further situating comprehension. As Chapter Five revealed, significant explication of ideological influences on my self-identity development occurred at the *image site* and within the *social modality*.

Barthesian visual semiotics considers two overarching questions when viewing, reading, and interpreting photographs: (1) what is represented within the image, thus a question of representation; and (2) "what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in images stand for?" (van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 92). The first question addresses Barthes' (1972, 1977) notion of *denotation*, the actual representations of objects within the photograph. This in turn, leads to the second question that considers *connotation*, which is a "layer of the broader concepts, ideas and values which the represented people, places and things 'stand for', 'are signs of'", according to van Leeuwen (p. 96). This connotative layer is of utmost importance in understanding my self-identity development as revealed through surrogate objects representative of influencing identity constructions.

Within the second level of signification or image interpretation, the connotative level consists of two types of higher-level meanings, according to Rose (2007). These

two connotative types are called *metonymic* and *synecdochal*. First, she tells us metonymic functions as a type of metaphor. For example, *Scouting Wunderkammer*, functions at this level. While at the denotative level, the artifacts in the still-life photograph depict my childhood interest of being in the Cub Scouts and various activities associated within the overall context of Boy Scouts of America, was shown from the artifacts in that image. It revealed my interest in outdoor pursuits, such as fishing with my father, collecting archeological artifacts like Native American arrowheads, understanding first aid, making collections of things (stamps, rocks & minerals) and various Western objects (tomahawk, cowboy bolo tie, totem pole kerchief ring). But these specific objects are denotative; at the connotative realm, they pull focus back to the organization of Scouts, which during the 1960s functioned as a symbol of *Whiteness*. It epitomized America's notion of normality as established by dominant society and its associated ideologies of what constituted *normal*, such as being a Christian white middle-class heterosexual male. Thus, this image becomes a metonymic sign or *metaphor* for dominant society's notion of normality.

Synecdochal connotations on the other hand, function as a sign when it "is either a part of something standing in for a whole, or a whole representing a part" according to Rose (2007, p. 87). For example, *Hippie Wunderkammer*, functions very specifically at this level. The family snapshot in the lower left corner of the still-life depicting my father water-skiing, contains a *Confederate Battle flag* mounted on the stern of the ski boat. That flag becomes both indexical and symbolic simultaneously. At one level, it serves as a cultural specific reminder of the geographic *South* of the United States, while also being imbricated symbolically with notions of White racism, Jim Crow laws of the 20th century,

and the overall subjugation of Blacks in southern America and beyond. Additionally, this particular snapshot speaks to other denotative components within the still life, such as the guitar picks, whiskey bottle label, belt buckle, other snapshots of me with long hair and goatee, and sheet music—all forming an additional “picture” or synecdochal sign of my persona as a Southern *hell-of-a-fella*, as described by Butler (1999) and Ted Ownby (1997) in their discussions on Southern Rock music of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s.

Connotations, or second order signification, is what Barthes (1972) considered *myths*. I contend, through my CVM analysis, this second order signification or myths, is where dominant ideological stances occurred within my first three *Wunderkammer* photographs and thus significantly contributed to my childhood self-identity construction. Van Leeuwen (2001) corroborates this notion in his discussion on Barthesian connotation, as “they are ideological meanings, serving to legitimate the status quo and the interests of those whose power is invested” (p. 97) through their visual representation within the photograph. Considering this level of mythical or ideological connotations therefore, my analysis of childhood representations denoted by artifacts from elementary school, Scouting activities, Little League baseball games, and implicitly conjoined with Southern dominant ideologies of White supremacy, privilege, racism, conservatism, militarism, genderism, and religiosity, my initial Southern self-identity clearly emerged. For six full years of immersion in these cultural and institutional ideologies with no counterbalancing perspectives, my self-identity was completely enmeshed within this unique regional mindset of the mid-20th century historical moment and neatly packed away into my invisible knapsack.

The remaining *Wunderkammer* photographs that comprised my *Passage to Maturity* and *Getting Comfortable* stages of life, revealed a mix of explicit ideological influences, such as the *Military Wunderkammer*, and implicit transitional and existential movements through maturing adulthood. In discussing identity and its development, Marcia (1980) wrote, “the identity structure is dynamic, not static” (p. 159). My identity has not fallen stasis. On the contrary, there has been continual movement in my self-identity development that has taken 45 years to unpack what only took 12 years to initially pack into my invisible knapsack. Marcia informs us, “identity formation does not happen neatly” (p. 160), but rather, as an existential situation, it evolves through one’s sexual orientation(s), vocational predilections, and significantly, one’s ideological dispositions. Likewise, Chaitin (2004) asserted in her discussion on personal and social identity in this postmodern milieu, our self-identity construction is dynamic and continually evolves over the individual’s lifetime. Thus, the second level signification analysis verified these attributes as they related to my shifting acculturation journey of self-identity development.

Semiological interpretation of images therefore, is complex due to multiple meanings derived from signs, signifier, and signified. As Rose (2007) stated, the multiplicity of meanings, by its very nature, means that signs are polysemic. When meanings of signs are multiple, this complex multiplicity is what she and Barthes (1977) referred to as *polysemy*. Thus, “a sign is polysemic when it has more than one meaning” (Rose, 2007, p. 98). I argue, based on this polysemous notion, there may be no exact right or wrong interpretations to an image. Each person interpreting an image will bring their own socio-cultural influences, ideologies, and understandings to bear on their individualized render-

ings. This is Barthes' (1980) *punctum* that pricks each viewer's conscience and understanding of the image. Thus, when I provide my interpretations of my *Wunderkammers*, it is strictly my interpretation, my *punctum*, based on my personal identity that has been influenced over half a century by multiple socio-ideological influences and lived experiences. My understanding and interpretation may or may not resonate with other individuals reviewing the same set of images; and once again, their perspectives given their unique backgrounds will influence their readings just as mine have persuaded me. Some people may have very similar circumstances during the course of their lives and may be aligned with my thinking, but then again, others may not.

Combining the Two Methods: What It Really Means

Thus far in my discussion, I have drawn attention to the results of two interdisciplinary methods for analyzing complex textual and visual data. Now I refocus our attention to aspects of combining these methods and how I make meaning from them. Although Biklen and Casella (2007) encouraged dissertation writers of interdisciplinary studies to employ multiple analytic methods, at times I questioned this approach as possibly too redundant or being over-worked. My doubts were expressed as I was preparing to present my dissertation proposal to my committee, when I wrote:

I'm beginning to wonder if my mixed methods approach is becoming a bit of over-kill. It's like doing two different studies wrapped up into one! For the narrative text, I'm building an autoethnography using traditional ethnographic qualitative data analysis framed within the 3-Dimensional Narrative Space Model (situation, interaction, and continuity, SIC). On the other hand, for the photographic images I want to do a visual semiotic analysis using the 3-fold CVM or critical visual methodology. Combined, I hope these two methods will provide a complete, comprehensive autoethnography of myself. But, still, it seems to be overly complicated. I think what's making this hard are the two disparate forms of data: Narrative Text and Photographs. Maybe I should choose one over the other and let one serve as dissertation, while reserving the other for a future study? (Research memo, June 6, 2010)

Although at the time there was considerable trepidation on my part, now that I have completed the two forms of analyses, I am confident they indeed compliment each other and bring richer understanding to the two disparate forms of data, that is, text and photographs. This process of deconstructing the textual narrative in conjunction with a critical visual analysis of the images, has forced me to mine deeply into the dark, dusty recesses of my personal memories, my headnotes (Ottenberg, 1990), if you will, in search of who I am; how I became the person I am today emerges from this type of combined-methodology. Methodologies of these sorts, forces a person, myself included, to be brutally honest with themselves⁷. By working with the narrative text that was provided with the images as a sort of historical guide for the viewer, I am exposing issues developed early in my life and in many cases either I ignored or I was not cognizant of their existence. Developing the event listing displays based on my life's chronological passage through differing geographies throughout the country, revealed to me defining moments of my personal self-identity acculturation journey. Of course, each geographies' unique cultural norms and standards eventually played decisive roles in my identity acculturation in those regions. The objects and artifacts that were visually represented within the photographs I created in the studio, in conjunction with their descriptive narrative text, act as sign-posts along that journey and aid me as a researcher in finding my way through those dark and dusty corridors, and sometimes small tunnels, of my memory in search of myself.

What did I find? I found a person who had developed his identity according to social norms of a Southern culture during a specific and defining historical moment of mid-

⁷ *Themselves* is a third person singular pronoun used instead of "himself" or "herself" to refer to a person of unspecified sex.

20th century southern America, which was the world of Jim Crow—segregation at its height (Beck et al., 2007). My particular microcosm of the South had all its racial relationships governed by Jim Crow “until the 1960s and even later in some areas” (p. 159). This was something not of my personal choosing; it was an accident of my birth, so to speak. In regards to one’s accident of birth and their subsequent formation of self-identity within the human lifecycle, Erickson (1959) noted: “For he knows that an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history; and that for him all human integrity stands and falls with the one style of integrity of which he partakes” (p. 98). The objects and artifacts themselves serve as touchstones of integrity during the memory making process, yet their representations or simulacra, within photographs serve in similar fashion. They serve *in absentia* for me: the viewer and artist.

Text and photographs were the two primary data sources in this research project and I combined two seemingly different methodologies to derive meaning from them. I would like to continue for the moment, my dialogue on combining text and photographs within the Barthesian visual semiotic framework. Barthes (1977) discussed how all photographs or images are *polysemous*, as previously noted, which create a complexity for the visual reader when choosing which to read and pay attention to and which to ignore. He explained that one way to guide the reader is by using linguistic messages as a technique to guide him or her towards the intended reading. The text, according to Barthes, interacts with the image to pose a response to the implied question: “*what is it?*” (p. 39). The text therefore, guides the viewer/reader towards an understanding of the base elements comprising the scene within the image. That is, text functions as a denotative descriptor of the image contents. Thus, the text becomes what he called an *anchorage* for

the photograph of “all the possible (denoted) meanings of the object by recourse to a nomenclature” (p. 39). Additionally, while the text now functions in this capacity of anchorage, the linguistic significance steps away from mere identification of image objects and now guides the reader into a preferred interpretation of all the possible connotative meanings available from the polysemous nature of the multiplicity of signifieds and their signifiers.

Barthes (1977) continued his discussion on anchorage and talked about how it can be ideological in nature. He flatly stated this is the primary function of anchorage: “the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle *dispatching*, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance” (p. 40, emphasis in original). In other words, anchorage functions as a *control* between image creator and image reader. Further, Barthes argued, most often we find the linguistic message within press photos and advertisements functioning as this ideological anchorage. However, I would argue this is also the case within my fine art photographic series, *Wunderkammer*. As each narrative story panel from the exhibit underwent ethnographic and textual analyses, it readily became apparent the text functioned simultaneously as denotative descriptor and ideological purveyor as it layered the denotative contents with the connotative meanings within each photographic image of the series.

Not only is there anchorage between the photographs and their attached story panels of text, the combined-methods I chose to deal with this complexity of data have illuminated on many fronts the advances and retreats of my self-identity acculturation journey. On one hand, writing the autoethnography, while using ethnographic and other

qualitative data analysis methods, I was able to correctly weave my story through time and place, within the context of emerging themes such as defining racial encounters and dominant ideological influences. On the other hand, the use of critical visual methodologies permitted several aspects to emerge: (1) to see how personal objects and artifacts once photographed, functioned as simulacra of my life; that is, representations of representations; (2) it allowed me to explore more deeply into institutional and dominant ideologies that affected my self-identity; and (3) as a photographer, I identified how photographs and objects contained within as simulacra, represented me and who I am, how I have changed, and who I am becoming.

Thus, the distinct and differing approaches I took towards analyzing my complex data of objects, artifacts, texts, and photographs, has allowed me and hopefully vicariously for my readers, to coalesce meaning of my self-identity. Sarup (1996) eloquently summarizes my thoughts: “Perhaps people try to retain their sense of identity by maintaining their links with the past. Without knowing where they have been, it is difficult to know where they are going” (p. 97). But, he continues: “The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity; objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols” (p. 97). Consequently, those many years ago when my mother collected and carefully put away the objects and artifacts of my childhood, their survival to become included in my *Wunderkammer* photographic series has enabled me to maintain that link to my past and build the foundation of my evolving identity, despite pleas from family members over the years to *throw out that junk!*

Implications From This Research

Photographs, the quintessential simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994), pervade industrialized and information-driven Western society in a moment of post-modernism. All of Western society, especially America, appears to orbit about a popular culture of still and moving images. Consider for a moment current technology such as *iPads* and *smart-phones*: The large viewing screens on these devices provide navigation for their viewers via images such as iconic symbols and in some cases, photographs. Manufacturers of these devices assume and expect their customers to understand these images and to be able to navigate this plethora available through these devices. Many, if not most, of my traditional aged college students use such devices and have grown up reading images more than they have learned to read written text (sorry, I do not include *text messaging* as a form of linguistic literacy). Thus, as Jhally (2003) has suggested, our society has truly become an image-based culture and an image-saturated society. When considering the social construction of reality and identity, Jhally claimed, “visual images are the central mode through which the modern world understands itself. Images are the dominant language of the modern world” (p. 256). But a question arises: How are these individuals learning to read these images?

Having made my pronouncement about our image-driven society, confession must be made: I have contributed to this image-saturation as I have been a professional photographer my entire adult life. Although I received my first camera in 1963 as a school-boy in the South, the passion for this way of life enveloped me when I was about 20 years old and it has never left me more than three decades later. During this time my love affair with creating images has led me down various pathways, but in the end, there

were three primary roads traveled simultaneously during this journey. One road was called photojournalism and I practiced this craft in the military for nearly two decades. I photographed and wrote news articles while serving in the reserve and National Guard forces of the Air Force, the Navy, and the Army. This road has allowed me to participate in and observe cultures different from my own while on assignments in Central and South America, most notably, the Republic of Panama. Those military experiences were unique and allowed me opportunities to engage culturally different people, that is say different from myself, at a personal level. Sometimes those encounters were brief while other times they were protracted. All the while, my cameras were in hand and thousands of images have documented this media practice.

The second road on this visual journey was called advertising. This craft was developed during my undergraduate days when I opened a commercial studio to service the needs of ad agencies and magazines. This commercial work has involved varying subject matter of people, places, and things, most of which focused around food. I am a professional food photographer. These images were created and destined for consumption in mass media outlets, such as magazine advertisements, editorial illustrations, catalogs, brochures, books, product packaging, and television. This body of work has appeared globally in such far off locales as Japan and South Africa. Even though I was cognizant of my images being in different cultures outside my American domain, the focus of this activity on producing photographs was the actual creative act and creative process. Not much thought, if ever, was given to the ultimate end use of my photographs, that is, how they were viewed and consumed by my mass audience when they received those images through the mass conveyance of communication technologies used by mass media.

The third photographic road I have traveled is that of fine art photography. As I stated earlier in this dissertation, fine art photography conjures thoughts of nudes, landscapes, and still life images. I have tried my hand at all three genres. But during the years after my career shift from active professional photography to that of being a photo media educator, my personal photographic work has taken a turn. Now the focus aligns its lens towards critical ideological issues such as consumerism, racism, and a host of other –isms. I would include my *Wunderkammer* series within this broad category, even as it addresses issues of self-identity and social-identity. Subsequently, this brings my thoughts to that of my daily praxis as an educator in general and specifically as a photographic educator. At this point, RQ5: “How does this affect my professional craft as a photographic media educator?” becomes more clearly focused.

Therefore, I now find myself concerned with how people (myself included) use, read, and consume photographic and other visual images. This concern includes domestic snapshots, fine art photographs, and commercial imagery used throughout visual mass media and social media. How does society, and individual people specifically, form understanding through images? What effect do images have on the way people develop their personal and collective notions of who they are and of representations of *Others*? These are the types of questions I ask myself as a photography professor. I admit, in my studio at the university I still teach students how to create and craft images and I am still passionate about this process. But, I am critically and cognitively aware of the power they have in shaping self- and social-identities, as well as perceptions of representation within society and within individual persons.

To address the change in my praxis at the university, I have begun sharing knowledge garnered through this dissertation research in my classroom and studio. Specifically, there are two upper division courses I teach on advanced studio photography and advertising photography. For instance, in my advanced studio photography class I have been introducing critical visual methods and Barthesian visual semiotics as ways for my students to move their thinking beyond the act of creating photographs and to that of thinking about overt and covert connotations within their imagery. Building upon this semiotic introduction, when these students enter my advertising photography class, we extend this visual semiotic foundation and explore issues of visual rhetoric as a means of addressing racial, gender, and ethnic depictions in visual media. As I reflect on my experience of combining the autoethnographic and visual semiotic analyses in my research, I see potential in my specific classes to have students write and photograph their own self-identity reflective projects. In consideration therefore, this could become a qualitative research counter-point to the psychometric based research known as *autophotography* (Ziller & Lewis, 1981; Ziller, 1990).

Stephen J. Dollinger, a psychology professor at *Southern Illinois University-Carbondale*, has built a career around Ziller's (1990) autophotography's generalizability through quantifiable statistics. The topics of his research include: college students' alcohol abuse (Casey & Dollinger, 2007), individuality (Dollinger & Dollinger, 2003), physical attractiveness (Dollinger, 2002), religious identity (Dollinger, 2001), identity and self (Dollinger, Preston, O'Brien, & DiLalla, 1996; Dollinger & Clancy, 1993), among others. While these are important and valid studies, they give little voice to the actual participants. Conversely, by combining methods of autoethnography and visual semiotics, as I

have in this dissertation and what I call *visual autoethnography*, the researcher allows the participant's voice to emerge from statistical probabilities. Thus, I view this adaptation of visual autoethnography as a potential counter-point to the role of autophotography.

But, my version of visual autoethnography is not limited solely to photography courses. This type of analytical endeavor is interdisciplinary in nature and therefore can be applicable across disciplinary boundaries. For instance, Rose's (2007) CVM was initially developed by her for working with geography majors. Through my adaptations, CVM as part of visual autoethnography has a place in my photographic discipline. Cultural and media studies are also disciplinary candidates for using visual autoethnography, as are sociology and anthropology. As a form of visual literacy, I have presented portions of visual autoethnography within world diversity courses taught in our College of Education. Thus, the potential usefulness of visual autoethnography lends itself well to interdisciplinary research and teaching practices.

Finally, visual autoethnography as a research method of personal exploration brings awareness to individuals about their identity and their cultural environment. Thus, I hope awareness has become an outcome for you, the reader of my dissertation, as you have considered your own self-identity journey in contrast to my personal story as told here. Some readers may be old enough to recognize my situation and vicariously connect to my story. Others may be younger or may have had dissimilar experiences, yet the principle is the same. Ultimately my goal is for you, my reader, to acknowledge the plausibility of my reality as set forth in this dissertation. In other words, my aim is for you to experience the validity of my project through Ellis and Bochner's (2000) notion of *verisimilitude*, that it evokes in you "a feeling that the experience described is lifelike,

believable, and possible” (p. 751). Take time to consider the objects and artifacts of your life and become aware of their special meanings to you and how you may see your own self-identity contained within them. Then pass them on so future generations may have the opportunity to build their own *Wunderkammers*.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Studio production shots.

Studio production shots taken during the making of the Wunderkammer series.



Appendix B

Gallery view of *Wunderkammer* exhibit.



Appendix C

Research poems describing my Southern childhood.

Southern Baseball

Within this *Wunderkammer*
typical for any kid
of that era
provided they were White

all was normal
there were no girls
on our teams back then
Within this *Wunderkammer*

all of my teammates and opponents alike, were White
typical for any kid
of that era
all was normal back then

Within this *Wunderkammer*
all of my teammates and opponents alike, were White
I had no concept of race
It was just the way things were then

I was going to segregated public schools
I had no concept of race
racism, or racial stereotyping

that age of innocence
a sense of wonder
an overall silence in our home
all was normal back then

Within this *Wunderkammer*

Scouting in the South

It was the normal thing to do
It was American. I joined the Cub Scouts
No Blacks, Asian, Latinos, or *Indians* allowed!
all was normal back then

All my buddies at school were Scouts
I became a Scout as well
as so typical throughout the 1960s
was in “pack” #312 and “den” #3

3rd grade in 1963
mother had become the den mother
my father never took much interest
Within this *Wunderkammer*

Within this *Wunderkammer*
innocuous artifacts: the arrowhead collection
so typical of that era
Euro-Americans had effectively rendered Native Americans invisible

I joined a “Webelos” den
my father’s job kept us moving

I never made it into the ranks of the Boy Scouts
Within this *Wunderkammer*

Space Race

During the late 1950s the Soviet Union
Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth
this nation's xenophobia
Within this *Wunderkammer*

Communist witch-hunt
fueled by *McCarthyism*
set into motion the activities
my father's job

Within this *Wunderkammer*
The U.S. race for space
America's original seven astronauts
had the "right stuff".

These space pioneers
Dad worked every day
all seven astronauts
Within this *Wunderkammer*

Relics and artifacts from my father's first-hand experience
launch-pad access badges
first U.S. manned launch
my intense interest in space exploration

Within this *Wunderkammer*

Appendix D

Event listings for my childhood and late adolescent years.

Event Listing, Participant's Early Years Chronology.
DatesTimePeriods Case.

TIME PERIODS

Locale	TIME PERIODS				Summary by Geographical Locale
	1940s Preceding participant's birth	1950s Birth to Pre-school	1960s Elementary/Junior High	1970s High School/Early Military	
California		Trips in early 1950s to visit Norm's Family Father began his job road trips to work on experimental military aircraft	Moved to Santa Maria 8th Grade (1967-68) First encounter with Asian and Latino Americans Height-Ashbury/Summer of Love	Father continued road trips working on experimental military aircraft/missiles	Father's job took him there numerous times and brought family there for vacations; temporary 1 year move during J.S. 1st remember encounters with Asian/Latinos; Hippie Movement
Florida		Family vacations to visit my Grandfather Ownby	Moved to Titusville 1960 Grades 1-7 (1960-66) All segregated schools until 1966, beginning of 7th grade Segregated church Scouting activities		Childhood home through elementary school years (1960-1966) Enculturation into Southern Culture via Segregated schools, church, and Scouting activities
Missouri	Participants parents meet in late 1940s in MO/IL	Parent marry in 1950 Participant born--1954 in MO	3rd Grade(1963) temporary move to MO (one semester) Kennedy assassinated	8th Grade (1968) moved back to MO from CA Junior high school was all White High School-(1969-72) only had 2 or 3 Black students Draft Lottery-Vietnam avoided	Birthplace and temporary residence between my father's numerous job moves around the country. Did not become permanent homebase until late Junior High
Montana				Entered military service in the U.S. Air Force; majority of my supervisors were African American men Encountered White cowboy racists attitudes against American Indians	Joined military and began to travel outside of South and Midwest
New Mexico		Moved to Alamogordo/High Rolls--1958 to 1959 Father working at White Sands Missile Range/Holloman AFB Trips to Mexico/SW Texas			Pre-school years; Father's Job; first encounters with "Others"--Mexicans and Indians
Tennessee		Numerous early childhood trips to visit Dad's family (mother's side)	Family vacations to Dad's family	Continued family trips to visit family	Father's family home with numerous family vacations to visit his family
United States	World War II (1941-45)-Uncles' toys/medals Beginning of Cold War Era-45-91 McCarthy becomes US Senator	Korean War Brown vs. Board of Ed--1954 Pres. Eisenhower--Space Program 1955 McCarthyism/Red Scare 1950-57 Civil Rights Movement	Civil Rights Act of 1964-ordered school desegregation Little League chartered in 1964 Chicano Movement--1950/60s Hippie Movement--1960s Vietnam War	Space Program--Apollo/Moon Hippie Movement--1960s Vietnam War	Major wars: WWII, Korea, Vietnam McCarthy Xenophobia Brown vs. Board of Ed-1954 Civil Rights Movement US Space Program Hippie Movement
Summary by Year	The US embroiled in world war and begins Cold War with USSR; McCarthy in Senate; Parents meet in MO	I'm born in MO during tumultuous times Numerous road trips to FL, TN, NM, and CA First change of residence to NM	Volatile times in US Permanent move to South during school years Family vacations throughout South and other US regions	Continued unrest in US Remain in MO for H.S., but continue trips to TN Father continues job trips to CA [I joined Air Force	

Event listings for early adulthood to present.

Event Listing. Participant's Adult Years Chronology.
DatesTimePeriods Case.

TIME PERIODS

Locale	TIME PERIODS			Summary by Geographical Locale
	1980s College, Military, Grad School	1990s Military, Farm, Artist	2000s Educator, PhD Candidate	
Colorado			Entered academia full time Began PhD program @ CSU Awakening during Multi-Diversity course Observed present-day racism targeted towards Latinos	Major Career shift into higher education as full-time faculty Place to earn PhD Became critically aware of continued institutionalized racism in modern America
Missouri	Joined military-USAF Returned for College @ MSU Grad School @ Webster U. Began advertising photography career		Moved back to MO to full-time teach at UCM Observed continued racism aimed at Blacks and Latinos Participated in research to uncover racial perceptions in media stereotypes	Earned BS and MA degrees PhD Candidate @ CSU Place to return to after Montana and Wisconsin/Colorado A place focused on education Sought ways to integrate critical racial thinking into photo media classes
Other	Navy--Nicaragua, Hawaii, Pacific Ocean, California	Two tours of Army duty in Panama Tours of duty to New England & Washington DC Transferred to Minnesota ARG and retired from MNARG		Extensive travel within and without the U.S.--military related
United States	Cold War with USSR Affirmative Action and increased minority actors in advertising and media	Cold War ends US invades Panama US attacks Iraq Internet makes headway Rodney King beating-national media coverage O.J. Simpson trial-national media	World Trade Center attacked US invades Afganistan US invades Iraq Media coverage depicts White racist attitudes towards Muslims Social media becomes popular	Cold War ends but military aggression begins in the Middle East Internet and Web change media perspectives and Social Media makes impact
Wisconsin	Transferred to US Army Guard Photographer @ Swiss Colony	Art courses @ UW-Madison Farmer/Farm in Albany Retired from military Photographer @ SC	Photographer @ SC Farmer & Artist	Longest stable period of my life--13 years in one location Served 1/2 of my career in Army Professional photographer @ SC Farmer and Artist period
Summary by Year	Time of military and higher education Beginning of professional photography career Military tensions w/USSR	Height of my military career and retirement U.S. military aggression Continued professional photo Shift in interests: art/farm Leave WI after 13 years Racists activities take national news media spotlight	Major career shift from advertising photography to higher education Move to Colorado and eventually back to Missouri Accute observation of continued racism is the U.S. U.S. military aggression ramps up Changes in media/Internet	