Proto-Methodology Chapter for the PhD Dissertation

Exploring the Ideology of Success for Black and African Nova Scotian Students in a High School Science Classroom using the Autoethnographic Methodology

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Inter-University Doctoral Ph.D. in Education

April 21, 2024

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

When someone asks how I became involved in social justice, I often do not have a concrete response. Even as I write my dissertation, I cannot definitively point to one reason. However, conducting and completing my Master of Education thesis in June of 2023 allowed me to deeply reflect and unpack my past experiences, conscious and unconscious behaviours. It also opened a whole realm of thought because it gave me another sense in considering how present decisions may influence future events. But I digress. Up to this point in my life, I cannot help but think of the numerous incidents and obstacles I had to face. In addition to being minoritized and racialized, I reflect. As I grew up, I believe I had a misunderstood sense of classism. I could not understand why I was treated differently than my peers. Social isolation, in addition to marginalization from the dominant society continues to impact how I live, how I educate and how I interact with others to this day.

For fifteen years, I have been a science educator, mostly in physics. I have been privileged to teach a wide range of students. I have taught students from various backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and students who arrive at my classroom with different values. This privilege has been a wonderful thing because it has given me a deep sense of appreciation and a high degree of mindfulness for students of diversity. As I navigate into my mid-career, I have been required to teach, what many teachers and students dub, 'upper-level classes' (e.g., International Baccalaureate (IB) program). I use the IB program as my example because, in the public-school system that I exist in, advanced programming beyond the Public-school Programs (PSP) is either the 'Advanced Placement (AP)' or the IB programs.

While I believe that educational systems should offer a wide range of choices for students, what these advanced streams stir in my mind is buck against my sense of classism.

While conducting my Master of Education thesis, I often reflected on what students informally shared with me about their schooling experiences. Streaming, which is a practice of sorting students based on their skills, curriculum and knowledge pathways (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), was part of how students appeared to identify their position in school. If students took certain perceived 'upper-level' classes, they would have the identity of being intelligent among their peers. How I interpreted their perception was their social status was also tied to what courses they belonged to. Consequently, based on my informal conversations with students, such perceived labels can be very damaging to the emotional and psychological psyche of students. This perception and labelling breaks my heart. In my eyes, such perceptions are false.

Fortunately, regardless of the type of student that enters my classroom door, all students come with some sort of gift to the classroom experience. But, with that said, in the system that I exist in, I do not have the capacity to significantly re-teach certain mathematical competencies at great lengths so that students have the capacity to meaningfully utilize mathematics to solve physics problems. This is mostly due to the tight timelines and significant demands already placed on me and my fellow peers. In a perfect world where there is adequate support in place to remediate such abilities, with time, all students entering can be successful. Even with all this said, I continue to try my best with what I have.

Along with the issue of labelling, there is another problematized issue in physics education. In my physics classes, my classroom demographic does not reflect the overall dynamics of my schooling environment. At the school that I presently teach, I would estimate

that twenty percent of the school population may be identified as Black or African Nova Scotian. However, this demographic is rarely reflected in my previous physics classes. To me, it has become a sad reality, which often brings me to the question why is this the case?

While much of what I have shared so far has been focused on the experiences within a physics classroom, this dissertation is positioned within the culture of a science classroom, which also includes both physics and generalized science classes. My motivation for conducting this dissertation is centered around an identity of supporting learners so that they can reach their full potential.

In my Master-thesis focusing on grit and student success in a high school physics classroom, I unconsciously did not significantly draw upon Black or African Nova Scotian students' voices. While I did cite literature that examined circumstances influencing success for Black learners, the students in my epiphanies did not identify as Black or African Nova Scotian. While this is not an excuse, in looking back during that time, I could not remember a significant number of students taking physics. Then again, I believe I did not wear a good enough lens to understand why this was so. However, I believe I cannot dwell on the past and must look towards the future.

Since becoming an established and permanent teacher in the schooling system, I have made it a point to attempt to recruit different students in my following-year classes so that my classroom demographic is reflective of the school population. As shared earlier, I can estimate that roughly twenty percent of my school population may be identified as Black or African Nova Scotian. Regrettably, I do not know enough about Black and African Nova Scotian learners, what such students face in school and in society. All of these factors are consequential to how these students may experience success in school. While I have taught many Black or African Nova

Scotian students with varying degrees of success, sadly, some of my former students did not meet successful outcomes. Because of this positionality, I chose to embark on this journey of vulnerability, to learn more about Black and African Nova Scotian learners, so that I can cultivate and enhance a culture of student success for such students in my science classrooms. While I write, it is important to acknowledge that this chapter will draw on the strands of my methodology section of my Master of Education thesis. Since writing the methodology chapter for my Master-thesis, I have gained a better understanding of my approach with autoethnography and, as such, I will be revising, enhancing and adding new content to support this version.

Researching the Culture of Student Success for Black and African Nova Scotian Learners

Critical Reflection and Introduction to Autoethnography

In starting my autoethnographic journey on exploring the ideology of success for Black and African Nova Scotian learners in my science classroom, I am always reflecting on my educative experiences with my past students. To peers who do not know what autoethnography is and how one begins the process, I often describe it as quilt-making. Broadly, it is like starting the design of a tapestry, by collecting significant and transformative moments of one's life, critically reflecting on how it impacts not only the self, but the culture of their chosen context and how such circumstances have led to some sort of growth, revelation or reflection. While this is merely an introduction to what autoethnography really is, more concrete details are shared later into this chapter.

It is important to recognize that regardless of practice or for research, critical reflection is vital for a greater understanding of future practice and action (Hamilton et al., 2008). Through autoethnography, I am writing and sharing first-person narratives and stories which help me gain

a deeper understanding of the culture of success that involves my former Black and African Nova Scotian students in my science classroom. As Adams et al. (2015) identify, to live a more reflective and meaningful life, writing narrative stories are important considerations to undertake.

Understanding Culture

Autoethnographic stories are stories positioned from an individual's self through a cultural lens Adams et al., 2015). As Walford (2021) claims, the careful placing of the researcher at the centre of the research is helpful in arriving at a deep sense of understanding with oneself within a culture with others. For this dissertation, I use Hamilton et al.'s (2008) definition of a culture because, as Ball and Ladson-Billings (2020) assert, there are at least fifty different definitions for this term. A culture is a "shared pattern of thoughts, symbols, and actions typical of a particular group" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 22). Through cultural viewing, researchers interpret and examine language, actions and/or interactions within a particular group (Hamilton et al., 2008). It is important to recognize that culture is not an exotic element that is only possessed by minorities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This may be because with White and middle-class traditions and practices being universal, anything different may be deemed as cultural. Ultimately, one must recognize that even the dominant White community also has its own culture.

Epiphanies and Mundane Moments

The autoethnographic methodology provides the appropriate medium for individuals to write, share and interpret their personal epiphanies and/or aesthetic moments, through narrative stories, which revolve around the culture they exist in (Adams et al., 2015). In life, there are

significant and monumental moments that are impactful and eventful. Such experiences are described as being epiphanic because, as Denzin (2014) claims, these transformative moments, whether positive or negative, are revelations that drastically alter the fundamental meanings within an individual's psyche. There may also be insignificant moments that lack transformative power and, consequently, these events are aesthetic or mundane in nature (Bolen, 2014).

Regardless of an individual's epiphanies or mundane moments, these experiences may be consciously or unconsciously compartmentalized. Because of my positionality as a public-school teacher, I face significant burdens to not only teach high-quality lessons, but also being able to confront daily administrative burdens (e.g., administrative reports, timely feedback for assessments, caseloads with varying needs, engaging in meaningful conversations with the families of my students, providing coverage for another teacher and/or, following through on disciplinary interventions to name a few).

Unfortunately, time becomes a luxury and because of these unending obligations, I do not have the time to indulge or dwell with reflexive practices. During the school year, I feel like going through the daily motions without stopping. However, during the summertime, when many public-school teachers are off, autoethnography provides the necessary opportunity for me to re-explore those compartmentalized epiphanies or mundane moments. This re-examination of compartmentalized experiences is important to me because, as Adams et al. (2017) clarify, this exploration "encourages us to explore aspects of our identities, relationships, and communities that, before the incident, we might not have had the occasion or courage to explore" (p. 7).

Positionality

The positionality of a researcher is "where one stands in relation to the other" (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411). In Walford (2021), the scholar uses the analogy of a selfie to situate the

importance of clearly declaring one's positionality and background when undertaking and publishing research. This is because without such identification of a researcher's position and bias, one may not be able to critically evaluate a "researcher's emotional, ethical, and personal dilemmas" (p. 34) which carries significance. In any type of research, not only do researchers have a direct influence on how they view, interpret and examine research (Mason-Bish, 2019), but their position is framed around how they perceive and construct the world, how they use language and how they pose questions (Berger, 2015).

Whether a researcher conducts quantitative or qualitative research, declaring positionality is vital. In my Master-thesis, I sourced Duckworth et al.'s (2007) and Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) journals as the foundational resources for initially positioning my understanding of grit and student success in my high school physics classroom. Their work was based on a positivist methodology. However, at the time, I was so enthralled with the concept of grit that the positionality of Duckworth and colleagues was something that I did not consider.

In revisiting these scholarly works, I must confront their research in a more critical way. As Duckworth et al. (2007) say, "As context for the current research … [we] omit from our review situational factors and social and cultural variables that influence achievement" (p. 1088). Why did these scholars remove such crucial factors? As my research in Ngo (2023) demonstrated, social, cultural and situational contexts had significant roles to play in how three different students grappled with grit and their success in physics.

Even though positivist methodology espouses an objective stance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), it does not appear that Duckworth et al. (2007) maintained strict objectivity. These scholars chose to conduct their studies using undergraduates at an 'elite' university versus that of a non-elite one. In one of their studies involving 1,545 surveys, they interviewed 73% identified

women and 27% identified men. Another study with 706 participants, 16 contributors reported either having 'high school' or having 'partial completion of high school.' Without explanation or rationalization, these individuals were removed from the data sets. That said, without clearly understanding their positional stance, questions like, "why did they choose such selective data" may be brought up. Consequently, this underscores the significance of incorporating a researcher's positionality because it may provide further clarity behind why and how they chose certain data sets. As such, what this example has taught me is that, in any methodological approach, a clear identification of an author's positionality is paramount.

Reflexivity and Reflection

In qualitative research, the researcher is the "central figure who influences the collection, selection, and interpretation of data" (Finlay, 2002b, p. 531). As scholars such as Finlay and Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) recognize, reflexivity is required by qualitative researchers to account for the aspect of subjectivity within a researcher's inquiry. As Finlay clarifies, minimally, reflexivity acknowledges a researcher's bias, however, at an active level, it is a wholesome embrace of subjectivity. Scholars, such as Olmos-Vega et al. acknowledge there are many different definitions for reflexivity, and, consequently, individual researchers are regularly left with an unclear understanding as to what reflexivity really is.

For this dissertation, I use Olmos-Vega et al.'s (2023) definition of reflexivity. According to these authors, "reflexivity is a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research process" (p. 242). Finlay (2002a) echoes this sentiment and elaborates further by describing reflexivity "as a confessional account of methodology" (p. 224) involving one's personal, interpersonal, conscious and unconscious influence, which extends to

the entire research procedure (Finlay, 2002a; Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Reflexivity acts as a paradigm shift away from the traditional positivist's arm's length objective stance during data collection (Finlay, 2002b). Instead of the arm's length approach, data collection within autoethnographic reflexivity becomes an active pursuit where researchers use their influence and experiences to actively construct knowledge (Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

With the daily epiphanic and mundane moments influencing my daily life, Finlay (2002b) reveals the power of reflexivity. As Finlay emphasized, reflexivity allows for the understanding of how certain events impact a researcher's perspectives, enable researchers to open their consciousness and, "promote rich insight through examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics" (p. 532). Reflexivity is a powerful tool because while it may reveal uncomfortable truths and exposes one to a great deal of vulnerability for scrutiny (Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023), it provides the opportunity for individuals to open-up their circumstances and allows for the processing, evaluation, and debriefing of their understandings (Koopman et al., 2020).

Sometimes, there is confusion between the term reflexivity and reflection and, as such, these terms may be used interchangeably. As Finlay (2002b) has identified, reflexivity and reflection exist along a continuum. At one end, Finlay claims reflection is a broad, distant and likely a passive endeavor which requires a general recall or light recollection of memories. But, at the other end, reflexivity contrasts with reflection, because it appears to be a more sustained and active pursuit. Therefore, reflexivity is a "more immediate, continuing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002b, p. 533), where reflexive researchers position what

they know and how they interpret the world to that of the dialectic of their daily lived experiences (Finlay, 2002b).

Earlier, within the positionality section, I described Walford's (2021) use of a selfie to describe the importance of fully disclosing one's positionality. Research that revolves around personal reflexivity must go beyond the simple disclosure of a researcher's general background information. Even a superficial writing describing a researcher's reflexive background is simply not enough (Koopman et al., 2020) because, like positionality, a researcher's conscious or unconscious personal bias, motivations and experiences may have positive or negative influences on how they interpret or make knowledge claims throughout the research process (Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023), thereby impacting research rigor (Koopman et al., 2020). Therefore, Finlay identifies the political nature of reflexive analysis. As this author emphasizes, if writing a reflexive piece is "done well, it has the potential to enliven, teach, and spur readers towards a more radical consciousness. Voicing the unspoken can empower both [the] researcher and participant" (p. 544).

Cultural Insiders and Outsiders

In addition to describing a researcher's positionality and reflexive background, Merriam et al. (2001) remind researchers to identify whether they are a cultural insider or outsider. As these scholars assert, cultural insiders are individuals whose identities are part of the culture and, as such, they have shared membership with the culture itself. However, for individuals who do not have shared membership, they are known as cultural outsiders or strangers.

While I have the identity of a teacher in school who actively works with students of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds, I share an insider membership with not only the culture of public-schools but also within science classrooms. But, because the focus of the dissertation is

through the examination of the culture of success for Black and African Nova Scotian students, I also exist as a cultural outsider because I do not have the unique identity of being either Black or African Nova Scotian. This positionality may likely put me at a disadvantage because while I am a person of color and experience daily systemic direct and overt racism and discrimination, my interpretation and experiences may likely be different than those who are fully within the insider culture. Consequently, it may be difficult to truly know what such insider members really know and experience.

However, while I do not have the privilege of being a full cultural insider within the Black and African Nova Scotian community, culturally responsive scholars such as Gay (2021) advocate for the development of cultural bridges for students and teachers so that each member can cross cultural borders and learn from each other. This leads me to believe that, culturally, insiders and outsiders do not necessarily need to be an exclusive binary. This is because we are interactive. We have a shared existence and daily interaction that occurs within the four walls of my science classroom.

I find solace in declaring this vulnerable positionality because in my estimation, there have been limited system-wide professional development on how to better support Black and African Nova Scotian students. As an educational system, when the political-social movement, *Black Lives Matter* occurred, there was acknowledgment that educators and policymakers needed to do more to improve. As a system, there was available professional development, in addition to having allocated time to have meaningful conversations. However, since *Black Lives Matter*, any professional development appears to be self-led.

As I shared in the epiphanies and mundane moments section, as a classroom teacher, I face significant classroom and administrative burdens and, because of this significant demand,

time becomes a precious commodity. Self-led learning becomes a burden because, often, one must choose between re-energizing for the following day's demands or becoming exhausted and having the inability to sustain the significant requirements of daily teaching. While I previously applied on two occasions for paid educational leaves to conduct this timely research and learn more about supporting Black and African Nova Scotian learners, such applications were unfortunately denied without explanation. However, as a privileged individual who overcame significant adversities, walking away from such a need would be like turning my back from students and families who want a system to change. Therefore, I took it upon myself to take an unpaid leave to begin this journey. For me, I cannot expect a system to change without changing myself.

Autoethnographic scholars have stipulated the importance of identifying a researcher as a cultural insider or outsider. Adams and Ellis (2012) stress the issue of relational ethics. They describe an example where a researcher, who is a cultural outsider, who also remains objective and impartial, entering a culture. This objective cultural outsider may have a perception of exploiting cultural insiders by writing stories for some sort of personal or professional gain, recklessly leaving and never heard from again. Having this neutrality is unreasonable, however, an autoethnographer's shared membership helps alleviate this negative perception with cultural insiders through the valuing of relational ethics (Adams & Ellis, 2012).

This leads to a personal and professional conundrum. While I do not have the shared insider membership of being a Black or African Nova Scotian individual, I have, at the best of my ability, tried to encourage and maintain success for Black and African Nova Scotian learners in my classroom. I also have made significant financial and professional sacrifices to pursue this research journey. My intention for this research is to open-up my worldview, to learn more about

Black and African Nova Scotian learners and, to frame how I, as an educator, stand in relation to the students under my care.

Understanding the Approach

During the introduction, I provided a very basic explanation of what autoethnography is. Autoethnography, in my experience, can be described similarly to the design of a tapestry. Concretely, autoethnography, as identified by Adams et al. (2017) is:

> A research method that uses personal experience ('auto') to describe and interpret ('graphy') cultural texts, experiences, and practices ('ethno'). Autoethnographers believe that personal experience is infused with political/cultural norms and expectations, and they engage in rigorous self-reflection—typically referred to as 'reflexivity'—in order to identify and interrogate the intersections between the self and social life. (p. 1)

Autoethnography originated as a merger of autobiography and ethnography (Adams & Ellis, 2012). When individuals write an autobiography, they are looking back and drawing upon past recollection of memories revealing stories of experience. However, for ethnographers, such individuals enter a defined culture for a lengthy period of time to use their observations, perceptions, experiences, feelings and happenings (Adams & Ellis, 2012) to write a thick and vivid description of the culture (Geertz, 1973), and to connect such knowledge to formalized research. Through such efforts, ethnographers aim to make the insider cultural experience familiar to cultural outsiders, such that, they bring outside readers with a sense of the insider experience (Adams & Ellis, 2012). Ultimately, autoethnography provides a perfect medium for a researcher to draw upon their experiences, self-narratives and stories (Savin-Baden & Major,

2013), so that they can critically reflect on themselves within the context of the culture (Adams et al., 2015).

Narrative Inquiries, Self-Studies and Autoethnographies

In Hamilton et al. (2008), these scholars claim narrative inquiries, self-studies and autoethnographies are similar, but there are blurring boundaries between these three methodologies. As these authors stress, classifying research as narrative inquiry, self-study, or autoethnography depends purely on the researcher and who they write about. In utilizing self-studies, researchers are in pursuit of knowledge which leads to the improvement of a particular practice (Hamilton et al., 2008). While one of my goals to this research is to improve my teaching practice and cultivate an environment which provides the greatest opportunities of success for my Black and African Nova Scotian students, self-studies are limited "because they do not necessarily focus on the cultural impact of the work itself" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 25) and, as a result, autoethnography is more appropriate.

Without an identifiable cultural focus, a research study cannot be deemed as an autoethnography (Hamilton et al., 2008). As Ellis et al., 2011 assert, autoethnographers need to widen their lens and worldview, bringing into focus "the social and cultural aspects of the personal" (Hamilton et al., 2008), and use their "personal experiences to illustrate facets of cultural experience … [to] make characteristics of a culture familiar for [cultural] insiders and outsiders" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276).

In the journey of autoethnography, autoethnographic researchers use what Adams et al. (2015) identify as an 'inside-out' approach. From the inside, autoethnographic researchers start with a recollection of memories, drawing upon past epiphanies and mundane moments which may have impacted their feelings, thinking and senses. Then, autoethnographic researchers

become reflexive (Koopman et al., 2020) so that they can interpret such events in memory to obtain a deeper understanding of the culture (Adams et al., 2015). As Ellis et al. (2011) affirm, this venture is a noble and likely, vulnerable pursuit because not only is the researcher the object of investigation, but it also links the personal, cultural and political dilemmas within the cultural context.

Qualitative Research

Much of my adult life has been steeped within a quantitative lens. As a physics educator, I once believed that the positivist tradition, which the quantitative paradigm exists in, was the gold standard for research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, over time and through personal revelations, I realized that quantitative and qualitative approaches have different merits for answering different questions. In the context of clinical trials for a new prescription medication, if researchers are attempting to ascertain statistical trends and patterns for the effectiveness of a new medication, such researchers would lean on hypothesis testing and statistical treatments for data analysis. As a result, quantitative approaches would be the most ideal.

However, qualitative approaches differ because their focus is on answering questions involving the 'how' and 'why.' Using thick and vivid descriptions of a culture (Geertz, 1973), qualitative methodologies can obtain a deeper sense of understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Bochner and Ellis (2022) acknowledge that life is unpredictable and because we live "in a chaotic and uncertain world" (p. 9), autoethnography enables researchers the ability to address and "show other human beings how they might endure it and move forward" (p. 9). Therefore, autoethnography appropriately embraces this emotional and uncertain chaos (Adams et al., 2015).

A Deeper Understanding of Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identify, qualitative research is "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices [are transformative]. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self" (p. 3). Purposefully, autoethnographers use their personal experiences to conduct research to not only "critique, make contributions to, and/or extend existing research and theories" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 36), but also attempts to fill the gap and complement existing research. Autoethnography is an approach that accommodates and embraces subjectivity through a researcher's positionality (Ellis et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2020; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Rather than hiding the researcher's influence, the researcher's position and reflexive background is brought to the forefront.

Under the reflexivity section, I discussed the nature of vulnerability. For autoethnographic researchers, such individuals also "embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and improve social life" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 36). Speaking through a critical lens, as a visible minority and as a Native-born Canadian, I live my live straddling between two cultures. At the one end is my Canadian roots. Being born into Canadian society has given me an ability to experience many aspects of life that one may consider 'normal' for most Native-born Canadians. But, because I lived in a household where both my parents are First-generation Canadians, I also live my life through the Vietnamese cultural lens.

This cultural straddling is stressed by Carter (2008) as the ability to successfully negotiate between both cultural codes in order to experience success. But this positionality has also given me much sensitivity and mindful thinking in relation to my work with diverse students

and families. While some individuals who identify as being part of the Western-born dominant group occasionally make comments that diminishes my perspectives and undervalues my input, the dual cultural membership (i.e., dominant versus ethnic) allows me to see the world through a multiplicity of perspectives. Although some individuals politely reject my perspectives, I believe that their interpretation of the world is tied to their positionality and life experiences. Therefore, I cannot fully fault them for how they make sense of the world. However, what my vulnerable interpretations and stories demonstrate is that autoethnographers actively use their position to open themselves to criticism so that it facilitates further learning and understanding (Adams et al., 2015). Because of my unique and dual cultural membership, I hope that my research provides a different credible perspective for others.

What constitutes legitimate research in human social interactions is sometimes unsettled and contested (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). There are some scholars, such as Anderson (2006) or Delamont (2009), who either challenged or proposed objections to the validity of autoethnography as a viable research method. As both Anderson and Delamont identify, a significant problem around autoethnography is an overemphasis on the individual researcher rather than the context and the culture itself. Walford (2021), who uses the selfie analogy, also advances this issue when discussing the ethnographic component of autoethnographic research.

Fortunately, this does not appear to be a purposeful act of self-indulgence as Walford (2021) speculates that such slippage typically occurs with beginning autoethnographic researchers. That said, while inadvertent self-indulgence may be excused for novice researchers, it does not give permission for experienced autoethnographic researchers to use their work for emoting, as it can skew undesirable findings (Finlay, 2002a; Finlay, 2002b; Walford, 2021). Therefore, as Finlay (2002a) recommends, autoethnographic researchers need to use their

personal revelation not as an end, but meaningfully as a way to advance more insight and interpretation. Because this is my second formal autoethnographic study, I can no longer claim that I am a novice autoethnographic researcher. Consequently, as these reflexive scholars have clarified, there is a need to ensure a careful balancing act between the examination of the self and the focusing of the cultural context.

In Delamont (2009), this scholar published a six-item manifesto, which was purposefully provocative and confrontational in order to promote debate around the objections of autoethnography. One of the first two objections by Delamont is that, "research is supposed to be analytic not merely experiential" (p. 59). Secondly, as Delamont identifies, the goal of educational research is to fight familiarity, such that researchers should not be conducting research in settings where they are familiar because such circumstances raise the issue of objectivity. As described within the positionality and cultural insider-outsider sections and, within the following paragraphs, complete objectivity is a utopian notion (Madison, 1988).

The 'ghost of positivism' is a euphemism used by Thomas and Corbett (2018) to explain the "analytic habits and traditions that mark and reflect the positivist legacy" (p. 173) within social sciences. The methodological stance between quantitative and qualitative methodologies revolves around its claims on truths. For quantitative researchers, their belief is around a single identifiable reality as these singular truths are "based upon natural phenomena, their properties and relations as verified by science. Knowledge, then, is something that is to be discovered rather than something that is produced by humans" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 19). However, "society does not exist in an objective, observable form, rather, it is experienced subjectively because individuals give it meaning by the way they behave" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 5). For qualitative researchers, reality can never be fully understood and, consequently, truths are not

only multiple (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) but, they are also socially constructed (Merriam, 2009). Inevitably, what qualitative research ultimately does is to reveal and enhance an understanding of a phenomenon (Thomas & Corbett, 2018).

In countering these objections by Delamont (2009), my usage of autoethnography is intended to see how my research contributes, critiques or extends the knowledge around existing literature. The narratives and experiences of my students are not to be merely treated as statistics because such identification of individuals through numerical forms will likely blur or diminish the richness of individual human stories and experiences. For example, suppose 95 students in a classroom makes a 100% on their assessment but 5 students barely pass with a 50%, statistically, the class average would favor the majority, rather than the minority. This example of treating individual experiences as numerical data is ethically concerning because it implies that the minority is not important. Human experiences cannot ethically favor the majority while dismissing the minority. As such, autoethnographic research is an attempt to pull away from the objective and value-free standardization of positivist research practices (Bochner & Ellis, 2022).

Delamont (2009) proposes three other objections that revolve around the act of a researcher's introspection. Simply, as Delamont argued, autoethnographic researchers are not interesting enough to be researched. While I described earlier that a careful balancing act is required to avoid the unnecessary focusing of a researcher's emoting rather than the cultural context of the phenomenon being studied (Finlay, 2002a; Finlay, 2002b; Walford, 2021), I believe my role as a dual culture educator provides a unique experience for the interpretation of the culture of success for Black and African Nova Scotian students. I do not identify as being part of the dominant White community. As a racialized and minoritized individual, I also do not identify as being part of the Black and African Nova Scotian community. But, because I straddle

and negotiate between multiple cultural lines, I believe the abandonment of introspection removes the significant richness of interpreted data.

Within these three objections around introspection, Delamont (2009) raises an important point around autoethnographers. As this scholar identifies, "sitting in offices inside the university contemplating ourselves and our bodies is ethically a problematic interpretation of that obligation" (p. 60). I agree with this particular objection because, autoethnographic researchers should not exist in separation from those they are researching. This ideal is worth acknowledging because while I am actively conducting autoethnographic research, I am still a full-time educational practitioner within the high school education system. This allows me to remain immersed within the culture while being influenced by its language, actions and daily ebbs and flows.

The final objection in Delamont's (2009) manifesto is around the impossibility of writing and publishing ethical autoethnographic literature. This objection is later examined under the ethical considerations subsection as Delamont's objection is best answered through a lens of interpersonal and relational ethics. In conclusion, researchers who choose to undertake autoethnographic research should not take Delamont's manifesto as a criticism. Rather, it should be treated as a standard for conducting viable autoethnographic research. One should use this manifesto as a rationalization as to why autoethnography is a viable methodological approach.

Recollection of Memories

In Osei-Tutu (2023), this scholar proposes African Oral Traditional Storytelling (AOTS) as an emergent humanistic methodology which counters the Eurocentric traditionalist approach, which have denied the validity of alternative forms of knowledge. As such, AOTS is a push

against the objective positivist-colonialist stance which reflects the living realities of African peoples. AOTS embraces humanity through active participation with those who are researched.

While my autoethnographic narratives will be drawn from a retrospective gathering of memories of former Black and/or African Nova Scotian students, nevertheless, I still consider such experiences to be an active participation with those who are researched. Because I will be drawing narrative experiences from a vulnerable population, relational ethics must be highly regarded. Fortunately, learning from the AOTS methodology gave me an insight which I did not fully consider within my autoethnographic Master-thesis. That is, instead of using the term 'data collection,' Osei-Tutu (2023) replaces the term with 'story gathering and sharing.' Drawing from this inspiration, this section is now referred to as a 'recollection of memories' because as Adams and Ellis (2012) identify, individuals within an autoethnography are not "impersonal subjects only to be mined for data" (p. 206). With that said, later into the chapter, instead of using the term 'data analysis,' I will be using 'interpreting memories and experiences.'

I, as the researcher, will be the primary instrument in the recollection of memories (i.e., data collection) (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I will retrospectively select and write meaningful epiphanies that are made possible through being part of the school culture and while also possessing a particular positionality and cultural identity (Adams & Ellis, 2012). Therefore, I will be looking back and drawing upon four past epiphanic experiences, as these experiences provoked significant revelations that not only drastically altered my conceptualization and approach to teaching but also fundamentally changed me and how I support and engage with Black and African Nova Scotian learners. While two of my shared epiphanies are considered as 'feel good' and positive stories, two of my other epiphanies are through sadness, grief and

wonder of what I could have done differently. I will share these personal narratives in terms of a story. Later in this section, I will explain why I chose these four students.

There is a purpose for sharing personal narratives and stories because, as Adams and Ellis (2012) maintain, personal narratives are a way for individuals to understand themselves within a cultural context. To engage readers and create a sense of "being there in the moment" (Adams & Ellis, 2012, p. 3), I will utilize Geertz's (1973) notion of a 'thick description.' For example, Geertz uses an example between three children making different eye movements: a blink, twitch and a wink. While these eye movements look similar, depending on the cultural context, they have different meanings (Riemer, 2012). The purpose of utilizing a thick description is not merely explaining the event but, it provides the cultural interpretation (Riemer, 2012) for a reader. Additionally, the use of thick description provides a sense of verisimilitude, making it feel 'real' to a reader and, in doing so, promotes deeper understanding of the stories and experiences being told (Adams et al., 2015).

Through the use of thick and vivid descriptions (Geertz, 1973), I will utilize Denzin's (2014) story structure. While other scholars such as Labov (2003) provide alternative story structures, Denzin's approach is the most straightforward and least complex. A story is made up of people (i.e., subjects) that are depicted as characters that are embedded in a context where the story occurs. A dramatic tension, crisis or epiphany occurs in which the story revolves around. As Denzin affirms, this crisis is a moment of revelation in an individual's life. Through a sequence of events that occurs, it ultimately concludes to a point or moral of a story. The moral of the story provides the important meanings to the experience(s) that occurred. No story is a singular one and, consequently, narratives will contain multiple stories (Denzin, 2014). For this reason, within the recollection of memory phase, I will present my narratives and stories around each character

before any of the interpreting memories and experiences (i.e., data analysis) is conducted. That way, each story follows the elements used in Denzin's approach.

Before I started this doctoral dissertation journey, I carefully gathered old artifacts, such as, journals, email correspondences, small gifts, photographs and other media, and deeply reflected on and journaled how these experiences were very monumental and transformative to me. As I journaled these experiences into thick and vivid descriptions, certain moments of revelations occurred, with some of them bringing me moments of joy, while other revelations bringing much sorrow and grief. Reviewing these precious old artifacts in relation to reviewing these journaled experiences brought such moments to plain view, as if these moments occurred within a day of it happening. With such epiphanies, I wrote how I felt before, during and after the experience.

Choosing these four stories was not a random act. With over fifteen years of teaching experience, I taught a great many Black and African Nova Scotian students. It was only within the last decade that I arrived at a permanent position within a permanent school that I was able to not only familiarize myself with the student body, but also make my presence known to the school community. While I have had many enjoyable and positive relationships with Black and African Nova Scotian learners, these four students were chosen because the revelations that have occurred not only made me consider changes to my pedagogical practices but brought past actions into question. Even after years of teaching certain students, these epiphanies continue to linger in my mind, while some are still left unresolved.

Within the epiphanies and mundane moments section, I revealed the unending obligations that I, as a full-time public-school teacher must face, within my daily practice of teaching. Through this positionality, I unfortunately do not have the luxury of time to fully unpack and

interpret my daily experiences. Sadly, as I have shared, I feel like I am going through the daily motions without stopping. Because of the hustle and bustle of daily teaching, the only time I am able to unpack these thoughts and have a meaningful closure to such experiences is during the summertime, when many public-school teachers are off. I am of the belief that this is an unhealthy consequence within education because with such daily experiences happening and, an education system which places strict demands on educators, without reflexive unpacking, it does not provide the needed occasion for educators to learn, explore and gain a better sense of themselves for future growth. Fortunately, at the time of writing this chapter, I took unpaid leave from my career to better position myself for such deep meditation and reflection. Therefore, through these practices, I chose to write my narrative stories around four students (with pseudonyms), Stephen, Alliya, Jasmine and Savannah.

As an African Nova Scotian learner, Stephen was a student of mine for two years who I first encountered through my Grade 10 Science class. Stephen was a very quiet student. In my attempts to engage with him, he rarely spoke more than five words. Every day, he struggled and, while I tried different strategies, none appeared successful. However, by the end, he barely passed. That following year, Stephen enrolled in my Grade 11 Physics course. From the start, I was deeply opposed to this choice because the physics course would be far more challenging than his Grade 10 class. Nevertheless, he was adamant in continuing in physics. As time went on, he continued to prove me wrong. He earned better marks and made consistent effort and, through such efforts, earned respectable grades. My experience with Stephen is one of the biggest reasons why I am motivated to do this research. I believe there are undiscovered epiphanies involved in my experiences with Stephen within the culture of my science classroom that are worthy of investigation.

Alliya was a very pleasant and friendly student who identified herself as being part of the African Nova Scotian community. At the start of Grade 10 Science, I recalled a student who had a very positive attitude and demeanor. As I got to know Alliya, I frequently commented on her effort. At the start, she demonstrated some success. But, as time progressed, I noticed her frequent avoidance from completing course work and was regularly absent. Through numerous attempts to reinforce her confidence and regularly affirmed my belief in her, sadly, through a multitude of difficulties (e.g., personal, school and societal), Alliya ended up leaving Grade 10 science. Even though my experiences with her were very positive, I believe there are still unanswered epiphanies because while I attempted to do what I could, with the power I had, I often reflect and leave wondering what could have been done differently to change the outcome.

Jasmine was an emerging leader who identified herself as African Nova Scotian. She was very pleasant, bright and appeared to be proud of her Blackness as she was involved with many Afrocentric-oriented talent shows, which were led by Black and African Nova Scotian students. These events also invited non-Black students as a way of building cultural bridges. Not only did Jasmine regularly perform, but she was also actively engaged within the school community. By the following year, she signed up for Grade 11 Physics. During that semester, Jasmine tried and, while things did not come easy for her, through personal coaching, it appeared to reinforce her abilities. I recall moments where I made comments, placing her Blackness as a great trait, without realizing its potential. This major epiphany is one which I intend to explore further through this autoethnography because it may have been a significant factor that led her succeeding and continuing her physics journey into Grade 12.

Last, but not least, was Savannah. Savannah was an African Nova Scotian student who entered my Grade 10 Science class. Initially, while not being very confident in herself and her

abilities, she emerged with a high degree of academic and personal success. We had a very positive teacher-pupil relationship. So much that I encouraged and made connections with school leaders to help cultivate her leadership capacity. However, near the beginning of the Grade 11 Physics course, her grades plummeted. Even with many attempts to help change her academic circumstances, she eventually decided to not pursue physics without a clear reason why. Our relationship soured to the point that while she maintained a respectful demeanor when I engaged with her outside of the classroom, it was always cold and distant. Savannah's story left me with many unanswered questions about what happened between Grade 10 to 11 that resulted in this dramatic shift.

As these stories involving Stephen, Alliya, Jasmine and Savannah have attempted to show, not all of these potential epiphanies may arise from a positive circumstance. While I consider my narrative stories with Stephen and Jasmine to be positive ones, the stories with Alliya and Savannah have resulted with deep thought and wonder of what could have been done differently. What these four stories are positioned around is the culture of success within a science classroom for Black and African Nova Scotian students. At the same time, as an active participant within this culture, I too, have shared membership with this shared science classroom culture. Finally, it is worth noting that while I do not have shared membership with individuals with the Black and African Nova Scotian community, culturally responsive scholars such as Gay (2021) advocate for the development of cultural bridges for students and teachers so that each member can cross cultural borders and learn from each other. Therefore, this research also attempts to position itself on the aspect of cultural bridging as part of its recollection of memories.

Interpretivism

When autoethnographic researchers capture their recollection of memories, the next important phase is to lean into their collected narratives and make a sustained attempt to interpret its account. Interpretivism, as explained by Young (2009) "can be traced as far back as classical Greek antiquity, [as it] is the view that human actions can be explained by interpreting it, that is, by giving its meaning" (p. 204). Society is embedded with meanings through our words, languages and actions, and, as such, the interpreted meanings can be difficult to encounter (Taylor, 1985a, 1985b). Therefore, to decipher the meanings, epiphanies and the experiences within such narratives, autoethnographers are actively undertaking the practice of interpretivism. Interpretivism, as a qualitative approach, is intended to bring about a greater understanding of the experience (Thomas & Corbett, 2018).

Autoethnography is partially comprised of ethnography. For reflexive ethnographers, these investigators do not report facts or truths (Finlay, 2002b). Instead, as Finlay recognizes, such scholars are actively constructing their interpretations and sharing how they arrived at such understandings. Stecker as cited by Young (2009) provides questions that interpretive researchers attempt to answer. The first is what is the object of focus intended to mean? Next, what could, or does it mean for individuals and groups of people? Finally, what is the object's significance to these individuals? Ultimately, as Young affirms, to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon, interpretive researchers attempt to answer at least one of these questions.

As Thomas and Corbett (2018) pointed out, the act of interpretivism goes against the objective and neutral form of analysis and, consequently, complete transparency in interpretive approaches is not possible. This is because "the notion that one can test interpretations and subject them to scrutiny in the light of the relevant evidence, such that objective conclusions can

be reached is a purely utopian notion" (Madison, 1988, p. 31). Tied to this issue of objectivity is addressed by Thomas and Corbett. These researchers advocate the need for fully understanding the positionality of the interpreter. As demonstrated under the positionality section of this chapter regarding Duckworth et al.'s (2007) and Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) research, there is an absolute necessity to fully disclose an author's positionality, conscious and possible unconscious views because how they choose to ask questions, select or remove data and interpret their results are through their positional stance. Subsequently, while interpretivist researchers may claim objectivity, their positional influences will likely have direct effects on how they may interpret or make knowledge claims throughout the entire research process (Finlay, 2002a; Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Therefore, as Denzin (2014) stresses, the claim of objectivity is a falsehood because, all story interpretations are from the researcher's viewpoint of the world.

At the heart of interpretivism is the notion of multidimensionality of perspectives for which a problem may be viewed and understood (Thomas & Corbett, 2018). Consequently, as these scholars advocate, interpretivism embraces the multiplicity of likely truths. However, my position as a secondary school science teacher within a public-school system equips me with the advantageous position of being a cultural insider. While I do not have the identity of being a Black or African Nova Scotian individual, I am immersed in the teaching of such learners within my classroom context. Thus, my interpretations will likely be different than those outsiders who do not have such privileged identities.

According to Young (2009), the language within a particular context is consequential to the meaning-making process of interpretivism. In order to sufficiently develop the understanding of such language, Young acknowledges that researchers need to spend sufficient time within a particular culture. Because of this standard, I, and other educators of similar circumstances are

able to adequately make credible interpretations and findings. This is because over a fifteen-year period of full-time teaching, I have had the opportunity to maintain shared membership with the students and staff within a public-school science classroom. The interactions I have with other educators afford me the ability to make sense of the language being used. As a result, individuals outside of this positional stance may not have the sufficient and deep understanding of the cultural nuances within the culture of a science classroom and, as such, may arrive at different interpretations.

While my positionality affords me the privilege to make credible interpretations that occur within my investigation, my interpretations can be fallible. This is because, as Finlay (2002b) advocate, an individual who are fully self-aware of their actions and interpretations would require a 'superhuman self-consciousness.' No individual researcher may claim this ability and, therefore, any interpretive explanation of one's experience can only be a partial account (Finlay, 2002b). However, as this scholar alludes to, interpretation from an investigator's privileged positionality does afford the ability to "unravel the richness, contradictions, and complexities" (p. 542) of the various dynamics occurring within the interpretation of a story such that, their findings may be more plausible than those without privileged identities (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Later into this chapter, I will address the credibility, believability and establish the aspect of Fisher's (1987) narrative fidelity, as these aspects further legitimatize and reinforce the interpretations I make.

Interpreting Memories and Experiences

Formally, the act of data interpretation and analysis may be confusing and difficult because there is an underlying challenge to "identify a precise set of processes that underlies it, as well as to follow a specific set of steps to achieve it" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 451). As

identified earlier within the recollection of memories section of this chapter, to embrace Osei-Tutu's (2023) humanistic approach which pushes against the objective positivist-colonialist stance which reflects the living realities of African peoples, instead of labeling this section as 'data analysis,' identifying this section as 'interpreting memories and experiences' is intended to maximize relational ethics and avoid treating participants in my stories as "impersonal subjects only to be mined for data" (Adams & Ellis, 2012, p. 206).

In Adams et al. (2015), these scholars identify the important work of "creating themes for the ideas, interactions, and insights" (p. 66) that are generated from the recollection of memories. Therefore, once interpretations are completed, I will develop different themes that came as a result of the interpretation of the experiences. While it is relatively early to concretely establish possible themes, such themes may already exist through the investigation of the relevant literature. As Adams and Ellis (2012) claim, autoethnographers will typically interpret their experiences by connecting their narratives to the existing research and, in doing so, "use their academic training to interrogate the meaning of an experience" (p. 199). While the literature review is intended to frame the interpretations, they are not intended to force an interpretation (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Therefore, what this process does is provide the medium for autoethnographic researchers to either elaborate, critique or extend knowledge to existing research (Adams et al., 2015).

Credibility and the Criteria of Truth

In qualitative research, Denzin (2014) makes the assertion that autoethnographers need to establish a criterion of truth that is operated around the context being studied. The criteria of truth, as offered by Denzin, requires establishing reliable ways to evaluate an autoethnographer's

credibility. Bochner, as cited by Adams and Ellis (2012) recognizes several clarifying questions when evaluating an autoethnographic investigator's credibility:

> Could the author have had the experiences described given available evidence? Does the author believe that this is actually what happened to [them]? And has the author taken literary license to the point that the story is better viewed as fiction rather than as a truthful, historically accurate moment? (p. 207)

To establish the believability of an autoethnographer's story, different approaches may be used to facilitate this standard. One method is through the establishment of verisimilitude (Adams et al., 2015). As Ellis et al. (2011) claim, verisimilitude offers readers a sense that autoethnographic stories, which are full of thick and vivid description (Geertz, 1973), feel 'real,' that is, "the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 282). In addition to the offering of verisimilitude, Fisher's (1987) usage of narrative probability (coherence) and narrative fidelity (truthfulness and reliability) must also be upheld within autoethnographic narratives. For example, narrative probability within autoethnographic stories "depends on the reliability of [the characters]" (p. 16) such that characters need to behave with a sense of predictability.

> As Fisher (1987) stressed:
>
> [A] character may be considered an organized set of actional tendencies. If these tendencies contradict one another, change significantly, or alter in strange ways, the result is a questioning of character. Coherence in life and in literature requires that characters behave characteristically. Without this kind of predictability, there is no trust. (p. 16)

While generalizability is a quantitative term, it can be used within autoethnographies to promote the criteria of truth (Ellis et al., 2011) and also support Fisher's (1987) narrative fidelity. In order for narrative fidelity to be established, it is dependent on whether readers of autoethnographic stories have a sense that the content is possible or "ring true in their lives" (Fisher, 1987, p. 18). This is evidenced by examining "how well an [autoethnographic story] applies to and is relevant for readers, [and], how well a story speaks to them about their experiences or about the lives of others they know" (Adams & Ellis, 2012, p. 207).

Consequently, when autoethnographers engage in reflexive practices and determining the meaning of their experiences using interpretivism, accuracy cannot be claimed because such holistic self-awareness must require a superhuman self-consciousness (Finlay, 2002b). As such, the interpretations of what autoethnographers can offer are flawed because they are distortions of the world from an individual's own perception (Feldman, 2003). However, such interpretations are not without merit because good narratives convince readers to come closer to discovering plausible truths (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). All autoethnographers can really do is maximize the credibility of their work through the establishment and enhancement of this criteria of truth.

Ethical Considerations

One of the objections from Delamont's (2009) manifesto was around the impossibility of writing and publishing ethical autoethnographic literature. This will be addressed in this section. As a researcher, I will be drawing narrative stories from a vulnerable population. Because of this work, it is fundamental that ethical standards must be paramount to avoid and minimize any potential harms or damages on Black and African Nova Scotian learners. I take ownership of using autoethnography because, as a research method, it provides the opportunity to see how my research contributes, critiques or extends the knowledge around the existing literature. It is also

intended to help support my own learning and growth. That way, I can use such findings to improve future pedagogical practices for not only myself, but for others.

Individuals within an autoethnography are not to be treated as "impersonal subjects only to be mined for data" (Adams & Ellis, 2012, p. 206). This standard is ethically important because the experiences of all individuals are valuable and cannot be dismissed to substantiate the statistical nature within positivist methodology. Osei-Tutu (2023) uses African Oral Traditional Storytelling (AOTS) as an emergent methodology that counters this dismissive stance and, in doing so, provides a humanistic approach within research. Drawing from such inspiration and, placing my students' stories as invaluable artifacts to be highly treasured, I choose to move away from classical phrases, such as, 'data collection' and 'data analysis'. Instead, both subsections were renamed to be 'recollection of memories' and 'interpreting memories and experiences.'

In Merriam (2009), a deep examination of a researcher's philosophical orientations is required to enhance ethics. Evidently, the practice of reflexivity is intertwined with the autoethnographic practice (Adams et al., 2017). Therefore, as Koopman et al. (2020) have stressed, personal reflexivity must go beyond a simple disclosure of a researcher's positionality because, a researcher's conscious or unconscious personal bias, motivations and experiences may have positive or negative influences on how they interpret or make knowledge claims throughout the research process (Finlay, 2002b; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

When autoethnographers conduct research, they do not act in isolation from others. Consequently, as Adams and Ellis (2012) have stressed, the issue of relational ethics must be paramount to avoid any potential likelihood of harm. These scholars identified past instances where cultural outsiders have entered insider culture with a perception of personally or

professionally exploiting such culture for some sort of gain, recklessly leaving and never heard from again.

As an individual who is also from a vulnerable population, this type of circumstance also occurred within my local Vietnamese community. More than a decade ago, university researchers, who did not identify as being Vietnamese, entered our community seeking knowledge around our Canadian life, as first- or second-generation Canadians. As the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, I welcomed these individuals. I also advocated others within the community to be involved because our difficulties transitioning from post-war Vietnam was something that other non-Vietnamese people needed to hear.

After sharing our stories, we never heard from the researchers, much less know about where our stories ended up. The years following my official duties, there appeared to be significant reluctance to accept outsiders due to such negative circumstances. Fortunately, I share cultural membership with the public-school system and, while I do not have the insider identity of being Black, Gay's (2021) cultural bridging provides me with the opportunity to lean onto both cultures. I do not have any intentions to leave education as the main driving force for pursuing this dissertation is to better inform future practices for not only myself, but to also support my fellow colleagues in making a sustained push to improve educational practices, in support of our Black and African Nova Scotian learners.

Ethically, whenever autoethnographic narratives of individuals are shared, I must provide those connected individuals with an opportunity to review the work, acknowledge their feelings and provide them a space to respond to what is represented (Ellis et al., 2011). At the time of writing this, I have been teaching for at least fifteen years. While it has been at least eight years staying permanent to a school, I have taught many different science classrooms under that tenure,

such that, it might not be possible or feasible to share those stories with individuals who may have either graduated and/or been disconnected from me for a very long time. Fortunately, while there is no hard or prescribed set of rules for determining how and when work is to be shared, each circumstance must be considered on a case-by-case basis (Adams et al., 2015). Therefore, as I have done with my Master-thesis, I have publicly shared my work through my personal website, scholarly databases and an open-source journal. That way, my work is open and accessible for others to view and scrutinize.

Because my stories involve human participants and, as evidenced by my sensitivity for relational ethics, I will utilize pseudonyms to protect the privacy of others. As Ellis et al. (2011) clarify, in addition to pseudonyms, researchers may need to alter "identifying characteristics such as circumstance, topics discussed, or characteristics like race, gender, name, places, or appearance" (p. 282) because, as Adams et al. (2015) echoes, revealing such detailed information may cause unintentional harms on others.

This research is positioned around the Black and African Nova Scotian community. As such, it may be impossible to remove aspects such as race or physical appearance because these qualities are significant components that contribute to the uniqueness of each student. With that said, if there are identifiable characteristics that appear to have minimal impact to the story, I will avoid disclosing such information to enhance the anonymity of each learner in my story.

Fortunately, for the last few years, I teach in a school where there is a significant number of Black and African Nova Scotian learners. This also helps enhance the issue of anonymity as these stories, while unique on its own, may also reflect some of the living realities of other Black and African Nova Scotian learners. Finally, to enhance confidentiality, the location, time and setting of these events will be kept confidential.

Conclusion

As a methodological approach, autoethnography is one that humanizes research, showing readers the value of narratives between the researcher and those being implicated (Adams et al., 2017). Autoethnography values the narratives, stories and relationships between the researcher and those who are being researched (Adams & Ellis, 2012). The pursuit of autoethnography is one that focuses on the social lives of humans and, embraces human experiences, rather than sidelining it (Adams & Ellis, 2012). Through this qualitative approach, the researcher is the central figure who actively constructs, selects and interprets their recollection of memories for readers to view (Finlay, 2002b). At the heart of the interpretation is the embrace of a multidimensionality of perspectives for which a problem may be viewed and understood (Thomas & Corbett, 2018). However, what the positionality of the researcher offer is a more concrete, plausible truth because, as Young (2009) asserts, individuals who spend considerable time learning and understanding the language within a particular context have the capacity to derive credible meaning from the context than those who do not.

Through this autoethnography, I will be the primary instrument in the recollection of memories. I will utilize Geertz's (1973) notion of thick and vivid descriptions to write four epiphanic stories, using Denzin's (2014) story structure. These four epiphanic stories are chosen because they drastically and significantly altered my understanding of success for Black and African Nova Scotian students. Once these four narrative stories are completed, I will analyze these stories and break them into different themes. The literature review will be used as a guide to help support and frame interpretations. However, as Savin-Baden and Major (2013) have stressed, while the literature review is intended to frame the interpretations, they are not intended to force an interpretation. In conclusion, while obtaining a PhD is something that I have always

aspired to, the driving force for this dissertation is to better inform future practices for not only

myself, but to also support my fellow colleagues in making a sustained push to improve

educational practices, in support of our Black and African Nova Scotian learners.

<div style="text-align: center;">**References**</div>

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