

Southern New Hampshire University

Autoethnography as Engaged Pedagogy:
Putting Voice Back into Academic Writing

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in English

By

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Abstract

We are what we write, so why are we taught to write ourselves out of academic writing? If we use autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy in the classroom, it will yield results where students feel more in control of their writing and have a better relationship to writing overall. This also allows for better relationships between teachers and students. Scholars have explored this method in the undergraduate and graduate level, but there is a significant gap in using this method in the high school classroom. Using bell hook's theory of engaged pedagogy and Jerome Bruner's constructivist theory as a contextual background, allows for a conversation to happen between autoethnography and engaged pedagogy which gives educators the opportunity for practical application in the high school classroom. Applying these theories by integrating them into a course construction and assignments creates an autoethnographic-centered classroom. This classroom environment empowers students to cultivate a love for writing while using their lived experiences to influence their writing choices.

Keywords: autoethnography, engaged pedagogy, writing

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I. Introduction

writing

is what i write worth reading?

do these lines carry meaning beyond

their humped, swirled, crossed forms?

emotions carefully crafted into words —

hopeful that they resonate purpose

and aren't echoes lost to time

yet still i write to reach beyond the surface

of the shapes of words to find

in the between spaces — truth

I was first introduced to academic writing in the eighth grade when I took English 1 for high school credit. The year prior, our English Language Arts writing assignments were all creative, personal, and included ourselves. However, once introduced to high school curriculum, I was taught to write myself out of my writing. It was not until I was in college, pursuing my undergraduate degree in English, that I experienced the ability to write myself back into my own work; and, even then, it was only in a creative writing class that I was able to do so. Almost exclusively, academic writing employs a cold, detached tone, where personality and experience give way to formulaic writing. Furthermore, this style of writing is taught, encouraged, and often required throughout secondary and post-secondary schooling. As I mentioned above, in my own educational experience, I did not encounter a creative writing class until I was in my twenties, and first explored autoethnography as the practice of using personal experiences to inform and influence writing choices, a decade later, in my graduate coursework. This background leads to the question: why are we taught to write ourselves and our experiences out of our writing? Additionally, what would happen if we wrote ourselves back into our own academic writing?

This thesis will serve to explore autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy, and through its practical application, argue that using autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy – specifically in high school English classes – will help establish meaningful connections between teacher and students as well as revitalize the students’ relationship to writing. The personal is so often removed from academic writing that students’ individual voices are lost. Using autoethnography as a pedagogical practice, through exercises such as poetic inquiry, adds their unique voices back into academic writing, allowing for more inclusion and better relationships between students and writing. bell hooks writes that “engaged pedagogy makes the classroom a place where wholeness is welcomed and students can be honest, even

radically open” (hooks 21). Combining this overarching philosophy with the practical application of autoethnography in the high school classroom will reinforce the desired results of inclusion and openness that come from engaged pedagogy specifically in the instances of learning and producing academic writing.

While conversations exist about autoethnography as a form of pedagogy, there is a gap in the scholarly conversation about autoethnography specifically as a type of *engaged* pedagogy. Michael Barr examines this idea at the graduate-level where “students approached the freedom offered by autoethnographic writing [. . .] [and] in the end, many reported that the course had changed their views of writing” (Barr 1107). And while research exists about autoethnography as pedagogy in upper level undergraduate and graduate courses, there is a lack of research discussing how this methodology applies to high school students, where formal, academic writing is initially taught. This thesis will address the gap by exploring the use, implications, and practical application of autoethnography as engaged pedagogy in high school writing classes, and what the hypothetical outcomes of this practical teaching theory entail. The larger framework that supports autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy include bell hooks’ theory of engaged pedagogy and Jerome Bruner’s Constructivist Theory. bell hooks notes that success in the classroom is when teachers do not “confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning” (hooks 13). This is in line with Jerome Bruner’s idea that the method by which students learn, process information, and construct meaning is largely dependent on the summation of life-experiences they have had, which, in effect, makes the experience of learning meaningful (Bruner). This framework creates a scholarly conversation between autoethnography and engaged pedagogy, which allows for an exploration of the practical application of such in a high school setting. This thesis will serve as an autoethnography detailing my personal

connection to writing and teaching, with the goal of reaching an audience of other educators hoping to make their classrooms more inclusive and help their students strengthen their own personal relationships with writing.

II. Context

Typically, when someone decides they want to pursue education as a career and become a teacher, they enroll in college and declare an education major, usually with some type of sub-specialty or focus. This traditional pathway to becoming a teacher normally involves a combination of coursework and a student teaching practicum. As students progress through their degree, they take classes in foundational education theory, psychology, and pedagogy, and then move toward classes tailored to specific subjects or grade levels. All along, they take courses that encompass methods such as teaching strategies and classroom management. This method of preparing future educators has largely been preferred for a number of reasons. Ultimately, they give students of education a structured and comprehensive education about education theories and practices, whereas participating in a student-teaching capstone allows opportunities for the practical application of knowledge in real-world scenarios. Furthermore, these traditional programs are aligned with state standards, so graduates are uniformly qualified to work as professionals in the field of education.

But what could be missing from this traditional route? Is it possible, and even potentially probable, that graduates of these programs are missing the personal connection? Have they written themselves out of their teaching, like I was taught to do with my writing? In fact, some critics argue that “the need to explore alternative approaches to preservice teacher development is becoming paramount” (Kondo 69) because of rapidly changing social and cultural communities. Teachers must be able to adapt quickly to effectively teach students from varying

backgrounds, yet traditional teacher preparation programs often “fell short in teaching toward critical consciousness” (Kondo 69) and did not adequately address how to facilitate teaching and learning in an ever-changing social climate. Furthermore, Sanders, et al. argue that perhaps the most egregious omission from teacher preparation programs is the lack of writing-specific courses. That is, the future educators, in their education coursework, are not required to take classes specifically about the teaching of writing. Therefore, they have a gap in their teacher education (Sanders, et al 393). This, in turn, may lead to defaulting to practices such as I was taught in eighth grade where I was told to remove myself from my writing.

While I have a Bachelor of Arts in English, I did not experience this traditional route to teaching. I avoided the pitfalls that John Schwille notes happen in some teacher preparation programs, where courses “relied on a pedagogy not suited to the development of practicing teachers” (Schwille 6). I had to rely on my lived experiences as a student and a person. My story begins as a piano performance major, where I quickly realized that spending almost all waking hours locked in a practice room was killing my love for my instrument. I took mental note of other things I enjoyed – reading and writing – and marched myself to the English department to join their ranks. Still, teaching was not necessarily my intent. As a member of a cult-like religion, my degree was merely “backup” in case my spouse passed away and I needed to move into the workforce from my position as a stay-at-home wife and mother. After a decade of near-daily mental abuse, I had an awakening, and divorced myself from both my husband and my religion. I found myself needing to support myself and my two small children, so I enrolled in my state’s pathway to alternative teaching certification program. In this program, I could begin teaching immediately, while taking a few education courses throughout the three-year process to certification.

This experience affords me a unique perspective, where I rely mostly on my real-world experiences with reading and writing, to make informed decisions about how to teach those things to my students. Because writing “is shaped by the writer’s earlier interactions with writing and with other people and with all the writer has read and learned” (Lunsford 54), why would any teacher preparation program ignore this essential educational skill? In fact, Kelly Norman Ellis goes as far as to say that writing “is where students learn to save themselves” (Ellis 154). Writing is paramount to education, and writing is part of the self. Ellis goes on to say that writing “is not simply an act of grammatical precision and succinct paragraphs that convey data” (Ellis 155) but that the act of writing is so intensely personal that in it, we can find truth about ourselves and each other.

III. Theory

To begin at the beginning, how can we take these lived experiences and mold them into truth? It is important to understand that we are all the sum of our lived experiences. This is supported through Jerome Bruner’s Constructivist Theory, where he posits that any person who is learning is an active participant in their own understanding and knowledge through their lived experiences and then reflecting on said experiences (Bruner). We can sum up our experiences through reflection, something important to Bruner. He promoted a type of discovery learning, where “curiosity and uncertainty increase students’ desire to learn” (Endeley and Zama 70) as students ask questions and investigate the answers, which fosters understanding and retention. This aligns with autoethnography as students reflect on their experiences both inside and outside of education where they “revisit and reconstruct a set of ideas” (Scott 218) in various ways to promote understanding and comprehension. Circling back to their thoughts and ideas about their experiences, students will apply those to their writing and find their own truths.

In his text, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Jerome Bruner discusses learning theories. In the chapter entitled “The Language of Education,” Bruner begins with an explanation that “most of our encounters with the world are not [. . .] direct encounters” (Bruner 122) but the constructs of our experiences and how we interpret them. The implication of this, Bruner continues, is that any “culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members” (Bruner 123). This idea is applicable to my argument that autoethnography as engaged pedagogy will strengthen writing relationships because classrooms, and even individual students, are their own cultures. They bring their own experiences to the classroom, which allows students to actively participate in creating the culture of their classroom (Bruner). In this chapter, Bruner asserts the following:

Each fact we encounter comes wrapped in stance marking. But now take the next step. Some stance markings are invitations to the use of thought, reflection, elaboration, fantasy. Let me put the matter in more formal terms. As John Searle puts it, it is the illocutionary force and not the locution that signifies the speaker's intent. And if the teacher wishes to close down the process of wondering by flat declarations offixed [sic] factuality, he or she can do so. The teacher can also open wide a topic of locution to speculation and negotiation. To the extent that the materials of education are chosen for their amenableness to imaginative transformation and are presented in a light to invite negotiation and speculation, to that extent education becomes a part of what I earlier called "culture making."
(Bruner 127)

Here, Bruner argues that the instructor has the ability to open up learning to their students through encouraging questioning and discovering the answers through self-guided and

collaborative learning. When this occurs, learning becomes a cultural experience where both students and teachers participate to contribute to the inclusive culture of students reflecting and creating their own methods to approach learning and problem solving. This is also in line with both autoethnography and ties into engaged pedagogy as Bruner goes on to discuss the language educators choose to use in education and how that language can shape the culture of a classroom. Bruner ends the chapter by reiterating that it is not rote memorization of information, but education and language that creates culture.

This is best executed inside the classroom, and in practice, students can participate in reciprocal teaching/learning, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative learning. More specifically, students can contribute to each other's education through group work where they take turns explaining and instructing different concepts to each other. Additionally, they can pose questions – either individually or cooperatively – and work toward researching and discovering the potential solutions to their original questions. When this type of learning exists in a classroom, the culture is that of inclusivity and collaboration – both between peers and teacher and students – which lends itself to other, similar theoretical practices.

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks, a theorist and champion of engaged pedagogy, suggests one such theoretical practice where learning should be “a union of mind, body, and spirit” (hooks 14) wherein teachers should be “striving to create participatory spaces for the sharing of knowledge” (hooks 15) where both student and teacher are active contributors to the pool of knowledge. hooks continues the discussion by asserting that this type of learning environment creates an educational space where both academic and personal experiences are welcomed to intermingle. This is in line with using autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy, as autoethnography is the intersection of the

academic and the personal. This, in effect, allows both teachers and students to embark on a journey of educational growth together.

hooks continues her discourse on the importance of engaged pedagogy through a dialogue with her colleague, Ron Scapp, where they discuss the importance of liberating teachers from behind their desks – both literally and metaphorically. They posit that as teachers “come physically close, suddenly what I have to say is not coming from behind this invisible line, this wall of demarcation that implies anything that from this side of the desk is gold, is truth” (hooks 138). Rather, once a teacher is more physically engaged, it facilitates a dialogue where students are suddenly an active part of the conversation. This supports my assertion to use autoethnography as engaged pedagogy as this practice allows for students to be more involved and open, which enables the success of autoethnography in the classroom. They then move the discussion to the need to teach differently because “the triumph of liberatory pedagogy was that we had the space to interrogate” (hooks 147) in a way that traditional practices prevent. Lastly, they discuss the need for teachers to be intentional because they are responsible for fostering a classroom that students can learn and grow in.

IV: Using the Theory

At this point, you may be wondering how these theories combine and work in an actual classroom. But first, I want you to think about the most influential teacher you have had. What was their classroom like? What was that teacher’s personality like? What kind of environment did they foster with their teaching practices? For myself, I thrive in a classroom where I am comfortable to be my authentic self and feel that my voice is a valued contribution to the class. In fact, most people find they do best in environments such as this even if it is not within a classroom. And, as Peter Blatchford and Anthony Russell state, “there is a strong tradition of

work in psychology which argues that peer relations have particular value for social and even cognitive development” (Blatchford and Russell 154). I posit that this also extends to the student/teacher relationship, supported by bell hooks’ thoughts on an engaged classroom. Through engaged pedagogy and Bruner’s constructivist theory, students are active participants in their learning, which supports stronger relationships between peers as well as the instructor. The students and teacher take an approach where they use their lived experiences to reflect and make meaningful contributions to the class where all diversity is accepted, appreciated, and celebrated. This type of classroom, informed by these theories, is achieved through consistent open communication between students, students and teacher, peers, reflective assessments, and an emphasis on bringing your authentic self to the classroom.

Similarly, using a combination of these theories promotes an inquiry-based learning system where students can ask questions, research answers, and reflect. This approach emphasizes students maintaining ownership of their learning by fostering critical thinking and keeping curiosity piqued (Brown). Furthermore, this process can also be applied to asking a question about themselves, introspective thinking, and exploring the answers that arrive, which lands at autoethnography as the center point of the fusion of engaged pedagogy and constructivist theory in writing to write the self back into academic writing.

At its core, “autoethnography seeks to build on other ways of knowing through personal experiences that create a unique perspective” (Henderson 33) especially through writing in an academic setting. The ultimate goal is to create a piece of writing that includes the self, where personal experiences lend credibility and support to academic arguments. Through a combination of autobiography and ethnography, writers have the unique ability to analyze their own life and cultural experiences to write in the intersection of the personal and the academic, wherein a

writer can offer a truly introspective approach to the subject they write about. From a teaching perspective, Tamra Ogletree writes that after implementing engaged pedagogy and autoethnography in her teaching practices, students “were creating their own paths [. . .] [and] none of this would have been possible without my willingness to get out of the way” (Ogletree 90) to allow students to bring their own experiences and expertise to their classwork.

The implications of this approach within the classroom reach beyond exploring and crafting a different type of academic writing. According to Michael Barr, using autoethnography in the classroom “promotes students’ own self-awareness of their positionality [. . .] [and] offered students a legitimate way of reading and writing material that was academic in nature but not stultifying” (Barr 1112). Through autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy, students have the freedom to include themselves in all aspects of their coursework. And why would we, as educators, discourage students from including themselves in what they write? In fact, it gives us the unique opportunity to learn about cultures, social conditions, and insights that we might not be privy to based on our own experiences. Ultimately, this approach of allowing students to write their personal experiences into their work will yield better writing relationships than the traditional method of more formal, detached academic writing because the reflective process of autoethnography allows students to include knowledge that others do not have. By using their own stories, autoethnography becomes a form of engaged pedagogy where students and teacher have a working relationship, understanding the requisite trust for the vulnerability necessary to include the self in writing that others will read.

In the field of teaching, using autoethnography as engaged pedagogy benefits the relationships teachers have with their students. Namely, because autoethnography is a compilation of detailed insights into the actually lived experiences of the students writing, it

allows both teachers and students to cultivate empathy and understanding for others. This, in turn, creates a classroom environment that is welcoming, accepting, and inclusive. Furthermore, it empowers teachers and students to challenge prevailing narratives while giving space and light to marginalized voices through the sharing of their personal stories in an academic setting, where “youth culture [is] an integral part of any type of cultural responsiveness” (Hollie 37).

Ultimately, this strengthens the students’ relationship to writing because they do not feel the pressure to remove themselves or their experiences from their writing, which enhances the relatability of academic writing.

V. Practical Application

To put these theories into a practical application, I propose using autoethnography as engaged pedagogy, specifically through poetic inquiry, in the high school Advanced Placement (AP) Research class. This is a research and writing-intensive course offered to high school aged students who wish to receive college credit. This rigorous, year-long course involves study in the discipline of research itself where students spend the year creating new research in a field of their choosing. Throughout the course, students are asked to complete various (sometimes weekly) reflection tasks. This is where autoethnography becomes paramount for students to maintain a positive relationship with writing, as they are allowed to include the personal in their research and their final summative assessment. The course syllabus for AP Research is as follows:

A. Advanced Placement (AP) Research Syllabus

Course Description:

“AP Research allows students to deeply explore an academic topic, problem, or issue of individual interest. Through this exploration, students design, plan, and conduct a year-long research-based investigation to address a research question. In the AP Research course, students further their skills acquired in the AP Seminar course by understanding research methodology; employing ethical research practices; and accessing, analyzing,

and synthesizing information as they address a research question. Students explore their skill development, document their processes, and curate the artifacts of the development of their scholarly work in [the Process and Reflection Portfolio (PREP)]. The course culminates in an academic paper of approximately 4000–5000 words (accompanied by a performance or exhibition of product where applicable) and a presentation with an oral defense.”

– *AP Research Course and Exam Description Overview*

Course Goals

By the conclusion of the course students will master the use of the College Board’s QUEST framework to explore, analyze and discuss sophisticated concepts.

- **Question and Explore:** Challenge and expand the boundaries of their current knowledge
- **Understand and Analyze Arguments:** Contextualize and comprehend authors’ claims
- **Evaluate Multiple Perspective:** Consider multiple perspectives and the larger conversation of varied points of view
- **Synthesize Ideas:** Combine knowledge, ideas and their own perspective in an argument
- **Team, Transform, and Transmit:** Collaborate and communicate your argument in a method suited to your audience.

Students will develop and utilize the scholarly research skills needed to compose an in-depth academic research paper of 4,000-5,000 words (with A. Introduction, B. Method, Process, or Approach, C. Results, Product, or Findings, D. Discussion, Analysis, and/or Evaluation, E. Conclusion and Future Directions, and F. Bibliography) and deliver a 15-20 minute presentation/oral defense.

Late Work Policy

Students who miss original due dates for major assessments will have the opportunity to submit late work within two school days; however, 20% will be deducted from the earned score.

Minor grade assignments and/or homework will not be accepted late; however, students will receive one late work pass per quarter that allows them to turn in a minor grade one day late with no penalty.

Video Recording

The College Board requires that the Presentation and Oral Defense be videotaped for validation purposes. Special waivers may be granted for religious reasons as long as they are requested at the beginning of the course.

Course Resources & Materials

Students will reference texts and articles that are provided by the instructor via the online learning platform. The main resources are the 11th edition of *Practical Research Planning and Design* (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015) and the 4th edition of *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Creswell, 2014). Additional assigned reading such as articles and lesson resources will be posted to Canvas and the Google Site. Students will complete additional readings related to their research topics from SC DISCUS, JSTOR, Google Scholar, etc. Work for class will largely be digital - students will need to bring devices and chargers to class in addition to physical materials such as folders, notebooks/binders, and writing utensils. Multi-colored highlighters, pens, and post-it notes are recommended for completing reading annotations. Any additional materials such as the 3-5 inch PREP Binder and dividers are optional based on student need. This can be discussed in PREP meetings.

PREP

Students will create a Process and Reflection Portfolio (PREP) as the primary documentation method of progress as through the research QUEST. In it students will include project brainstorming, experimentation with methods, monthly reflections, copies of communication with consultants, peer review worksheets, data and much more. Every month students will meet individually with the instructor to review and discuss the PREP. These monthly meetings will offer an opportunity to receive input from the instructor and to reflect via a two-paragraph document (or poetic inquiry) on your progress (due three days after the meeting). PREPs may be completed physically in a binder or virtually via a Google Site shared with the instructor.

AP Capstone Policy on Plagiarism and Falsification or Fabrication of Information

A student who fails to acknowledge the source or author of any and all information or evidence taken from the work of someone else through citation, attribution or reference in the body of the work, or through a bibliographic entry, will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Research Performance Task. A student who incorporates falsified or fabricated information (e.g. evidence, data, sources, and/or authors) will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Research Performance Task.

College Board Policy on Use of AI Tools

“Students are categorically prohibited from using any and all Artificial Intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT or DALL-E) or essay writing services (e.g. Chegg or Course Hero) to guide, brainstorm, draft, or create student work related to any AP assessment, including written projects and performance tasks. The AP Program reserves the right to validate student work submitted for AP African American Studies, AP Art and Design, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Research, and AP Seminar with plagiarism detection tools and other investigative efforts to identify non-student generated work. Any use of Artificial Intelligence tools or essay writing services will be considered an exam violation and may result in the cancellation of a student’s AP score(s).” - *AP Central*

Grading Procedures:

Graded work for the course will be contained in student PREP responses. Nine weeks grades are calculated using the district policy of 60% minor and 40% major. Students who choose to not submit their research paper to the College Board will still need to submit a research paper and give a presentation/oral defense that will be worth 20% of their overall class grade.

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 0-59

Course Schedule:

The teacher reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time, students will be given notice and asked to note changes on course affiliated resources (course agenda Google Slides, Google Site, Canvas, etc.).

Unit One: Introduction to Research Methods

Projected Timeframe: 8 Weeks

Objectives: 1.1C, 1.1D, 1.2A, 1.3A, 1.5D, 2.1B, 2.2A, 2.2B, 2.2C, 2.2D, 4.1B, 4.2A, 4.3A, 4.5A, 5.1A(R), 5.1B & 5.1D

Assignments:

- Blog Posts/Podcast (1.2A, 1.3A, 2.1B, 5.1B)
- Research Disciplines, Methods & Types (4.1B, 4.2A)
- Research Study Design Evaluations (2.2D, 2.1B, 2.2A, 2.2B, 2.2C, 2.2D)
- Research Ethics (1.5D)
- Research Question & Problem Statement (5.1D)
- Drafting Annotated Bibliography (1.3A, 2.1B, 2.2A, 4.3A, 5.1B)
- Research Inquiry Planning (1.1C, 1.1D, 1.5B, 4.1B, 4.5A)
- PREP Work (1.5B, 5.1A(R))
- Comprehension Checks
- Reading Quizzes

Bi-Weekly Work-In-Progress (WIP) Interview: Students maintain a research portfolio that records revisions, amendments, and reflections during the inquiry process. Within this PREP, students also prepare and periodically update the project timetable or plan that clearly outlines what activities must be accomplished and the deadlines by which the objectives of the course must be achieved. The teacher will review the PREP during scheduled conferences

Drafting of Research Question: Students will differentiate between well and poorly formed research questions and develop their own initial research questions according to these criteria. Working with other students, they will offer and receive feedback on their research question drafts.

Finalization of Research Question and Purpose of Inquiry: Students will develop a clearly articulated research question that is capable of being researched at this level and also clearly communicates the purpose/goals of the inquiry. This research question will be used as a foundation for the remaining formative assessments for the course. Students will review strategies to help them transform identified topics of inquiry into problem statements and ultimately into effective research questions. They will define the criteria for good research questions and practice writing, evaluating, and revising their own. They will collaborate with other students to evaluate and revise research questions for their scope, focus, value, and feasibility.

Annotated Bibliography: Inquiry Methods of the Field of Study. Students will identify the research question, variables, measurements, and limitations within published quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research studies. Students will differentiate between the purpose and components of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies; describe procedures used for analysis in sufficient detail to permit understanding of how the data were analyzed and the processes and assumptions underlying specific techniques; and evaluate the fit between the purpose of the proposal, its research design, and its data collection strategy as it pertains to their inquiry (at least five sources).

Students present their possible research questions to the entire class in a poster presentation, defending their choice, explaining their planned research project and research method, and considering peer and instructor feedback. Students evaluate the strength of a series of research questions or topics and revise them if necessary. Students identify the implied approach and design of the research questions. Using background information on general research methods, students identify one of the three research methods (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) to align with the implied goals of the research questions.

Students will study controversial projects such as the Milgram obedience experiment and the Stanford prison experiment to understand the importance of ethical practices that involve human subjects research. We will follow this up with a discussion of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), what kinds of research require IRB approval, and how the approval process works.

AP Capstone Policy on Plagiarism and Falsification or Fabrication of Information: A student who fails to acknowledge the source or author of any and all information or evidence taken from the work of someone else through citation, attribution or reference in the body of the work, or through a bibliographic entry, will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Task. A student who incorporates falsified or fabricated information (e.g. evidence, data, sources, and/or authors) will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar

and/or AP Research Performance Task.

Common Knowledge, Copyright, and Plagiarism Activity: Students will read a series of 10 scenarios/statements and work with the teacher to indicate whether the scenarios/situations represent common knowledge, violation of copyright or intellectual property, and/or plagiarism. Students will provide rationale for their decisions.

Unit Two: Inquiry Proposal Finalization and Setting Up Research Project

Projected Timeframe: 5 Weeks

Objectives: 1.1E, 1.4A, 2.3B, 3.1A, 3.2A, 4.1A, & 4.4A Assignments

- Blog Posts/Podcast (2.3B)
- PREP Work (5.1A(R))
- Surveys (1.3A)
- Inquiry Proposal Submission (1.1E, 4.1A, 4.4A)
- Research Study Design Evaluations (2.2D, 2.1B, 2.2A, 2.2B, 2.2C, 2.2D)
- Annotated Bibliography Submission (1.4A, 3.1A, 3.2A, 4.3A)
- Comprehension Checks
- Reading Quizzes

This unit will continue focusing on alignment of method with the literature currently available on the topic and see the students forming complete drafts of their literature review component of their final papers. Revisions may be necessary throughout as new sources provide new insights, but at some point the students will need to know when they have collected enough data and are ready to focus on collecting data that addresses identified gaps on the literature review.

To demonstrate their understanding that simply obtaining a large number of sources ("search quantity") is less important than a careful and considered analysis of sources ("research quality"), students will evaluate the strength of a series of annotated bibliography entries as these pertain to the students' questions and the AP Research course requirements.

Students will then add five to 10 additional sources to their initial search annotated bibliography, indicating the value of each to "comprehensive review" of the literature of the field, including its multiple perspectives.

Students will review the Discussion and Conclusion sections of three sample research papers and identify common elements of data/information display, analysis, and synthesis in these sections.

To keep track of the inquiry process, students are required to keep a digital Process and Reflection Portfolio (PREP) journal, a formative assessment tool, which will be shared with and reviewed by the AP Research Teacher. Throughout the course, students use the PREP to chart their engagement with the QUEST ideas, with special attention paid to the following:

- Their choice of a research question and what prompted their interest in the topic
- Their research process, including important sources (documents, people, multimedia)
- Analysis of evidence as it becomes available
- Changes in the direction of the project and/or initial assumptions
- Ways in which the students have worked on their own or as part of a larger intellectual community
- Challenges they have encountered, as well as attempted solutions
- Conversations with the teacher and expert advisor(s)

Unit Three: Building and Developing Your Project

Projected Timeframe: 9 Weeks

Objectives: Continuation of previous objectives plus 1.5B, 1.5C, 2.3A, 4.2B, 5.1C, & 5.3A Assignments

- Blog Posts/Podcasts (1.5C, 5.1C, 5.3A)
- PREP Work (5.1A(R), 5.3A)
- Survey Task (1.3A, 1.5B, 5.1C)
- Methods Evaluation (2.3A, 4.2B)
- Peer Editing (5.4A, 5.4B, 5.3A)
- Comprehension Checks
- Reading Quizzes

After receiving teacher approval of their Inquiry Proposal, students will complete and submit their final research project. During the process they will go through an extensive peer and expert-in-the field review process in addition to a rubric-based assessment of their own work.

Throughout this unit, students will finalize their own research, using both formal and informal peer review opportunities to revise their writing. Students will also begin to plan their oral presentations as they develop conclusions from their inquiries. Students will develop their methods in scheduled consultations with the AP Research teacher and expert advisors to ensure alignment between the question type and research method.

Students will also revisit ethics requirements to ensure that proper guidelines are followed in this process. Through the process of developing their Inquiry Proposal Form, students identify the topic of study, research question, preliminary research, methodological and ethical considerations, and disciplinary style. Once approval has been granted by the AP Research teacher, the student may seek an expert advisor and begin the research process. If the Inquiry Proposal requires a more extensive consideration of ethics and potential harm (for example, involvement of human subjects), Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be required. Students present a preliminary Inquiry Proposal via a poster presentation (via a single PowerPoint slide) for peer review, identify the type of expert advisor they will need and begin seeking such assistance, finalize and submit

their proposals, and reflect on feedback provided. Proposals will be further refined in subsequent presentations.

A series of activities will assist students in the planning, revision, and completion of their formal research proposals, which they will submit by the stated deadline. We will discuss plagiarism to ensure that students know how to give full credit to their sources using a disciplinary-specific style as they plan and collect their information. Students will engage in the strategies of a poster presentation, elevator speech, and peer review multiple times to strengthen their skills in distilling their research proposals to key elements and presenting their proposals in a succinct and effective manner.

Students will be instructed in the ethical principles and practices of research that involves human subjects. Students will review a series of inquiry proposal forms and evaluate them for the use of ethical research practices. Students will provide suggestions for revision based on the guidelines in ethical research practices. All such studies must be approved by the school's Institutional Review Board (IRB). A representative of the school's IRB will discuss the approval process with students.

Unit Four: Testing Your Project and Conducting Research

Projected Timeframe: 9 Weeks

Objectives: Continuation of previous objectives plus 5.1E, 5.1F, 5.3C, 5.4A, & 5.4B
Assignments

- Blog Posts/Podcasts
- PREP Work (5.1A(R), 5.3C)
- Presentation 101 (5.1E)
- Public Speaking Practice (5.1E, 5.4A, 5.4B)
- Oral Defense Questions (5.1F, 5.4A, 5.4B)
- Data Collection & Analysis (5.3C)
- Comprehension Checks
- Reading Quizzes

From January to March, students compose, peer review, and submit their academic papers, ensuring all components are present and meet rubric criteria. Students will then use Turnitin to check proper attribution of sources. They will also submit any additional scholarly work (project, product, or performance) used to support the paper. Students will compare discipline-specific formats and citation styles to understand differences in emphasis among the disciplines and to develop rationale for choosing a style for their academic paper. Students will prepare and deliver an oral presentation on a topic using no visual aids or other media. Students will then prepare and deliver an oral presentation on the same topic utilizing visual aids and other appropriate media. This is followed by a short, written reflection on the challenges and opportunities of making and delivering each presentation.

Unit Five: Conducting Your Research and Writing Your Paper

Projected Timeframe: 8 Weeks

Objectives: Continuation of previous objectives. Assignments

- Blog Posts/Podcasts
- PREP Conclusion (5.1A(R))
- Draft Workshop (5.1D)
- Draft Peer Review (5.4A, 5.4B)
- Oral Defense Practice (5.1A(R), 5.1D, 5.1E, 5.1F)
- Oral Defense Peer Feedback (5.1E)

Unit Five will conclude the course with the student submission of scores to the AP Digital Portfolio on College Board and delivery of the Oral Defense presentation. Remaining time in the course will be spent reflecting and demonstrating work to AP Seminar students.

Students will prepare their presentation using an appropriate medium. They will familiarize themselves with the potential questions that may be posed during the Presentation and Oral Defense. In small groups, students will rehearse and record their practice presentations. They will then participate in peer review activities and assess their own presentation practice using the rubric guidelines. Students' assessment of their own practice presentation will be recorded in their PREP. This practice will culminate in students' final presentation and oral defense.

B. PREP Response Prompt and Rubric

The required weekly responses are part of the Process and Reflection Portfolio (PREP) that students build throughout the year as part of documenting their research process. These responses are currently encouraged to be more traditionally academic in tone but serve as a vehicle for personal reflection in creative ways where autoethnography can shine. What follows is an example of an autoethnographic PREP Response assignment prompt, rubric, and sample submission.

i. PREP Response Prompt:

As part of your research thus far, you have completed annotated bibliography. This assignment is designed for you to reflect on this experience and consider how it has impacted your research. Using autoethnography, write a poetic reflection of any kind (rhymed, free verse, sonnet, etc) to address the following:

- Initial Understanding/Approach (Did you know what an annotated bibliography was? How did you approach the task of gathering sources?)
- Challenges (What challenges did you encounter? How did you overcome them?)
- Evaluation (How did your annotations help you discern the relativity and quality of the sources you found?)
- Reflection (What aspect of the annotated bibliography was most insightful? If you were to do the assignment over again, what would you do differently and why?)

ii. PREP Response Rubric:

Autoethnography Poetic Reflection Rubric for AP Research Reflection Response

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Depth of Reflection	Demonstrates an insightful reflection on personal experiences. Connects with the research topic, providing unique perspectives.	Demonstrates thoughtful reflection with good connection to the research topic.	Provides a basic reflection with minor connection to the research topic. Insights and perspectives are superficial.	Reflection lacks clear connection to the research topic. Insights are minimal or absent.

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Use of Poetic Devices	Masterfully uses poetic devices to enhance the reflection. These devices enrich the overall meaning.	Effectively uses poetic devices, which contribute to the reflection.	Uses poetic devices, but the devices provide limited contribution to the reflection.	Does not use poetic devices.
Connection to Autoethnographic Methodology	Demonstrates a clear understanding of autoethnography and integrates it seamlessly with the reflection to enhance the overall reflection.	Shows a good understanding of autoethnography and incorporates it well in the reflection.	Displays a basic understanding of autoethnography yet lacks a connection to the research process.	Shows little to no understanding of autoethnography and does not incorporate it into the reflection.
Creativity and Originality	The reflection is original and creatively expresses personal experiences in the research process.	The reflection is original and expresses personal experiences, though some parts may be lacking in creativity.	The reflection shows some originality but relies more on traditional conventions.	The reflection lacks originality and creativity.
Organization and Coherence	The reflection is well-organized and coherent with no errors.	The reflection is generally well-organized with a few minor issues.	The reflection has noticeable issues with flow or transitions.	The reflection is poorly organized, making it difficult to follow.
Language and Expression	Language is rich and expressive which enhances the reflection's impact and clarity.	Language is clear and expressive, with occasional lapses, but the reflection is still impactful.	Language is mostly clear but may lack expressiveness. The reflection's impact is limited.	Language is unclear, detracting from the overall reflection.
Engagement with Research Context	Engages with the research process, demonstrating a thorough understanding and connection. The reflection clearly links personal	Engages with the research process, showing a good understanding. The reflection shows links personal experiences and	Shows some engagement with the research process, but the understanding and connections are basic.	Shows little to no engagement with the research process. The reflection fails to clearly link personal experiences.

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
	experiences to the research process.	research process with less clarity.		

Scoring Guidelines

- **Excellent (4):** 28-32 points
- **Good (3):** 21-27 points
- **Satisfactory (2):** 14-20 points
- **Needs Improvement (1):** 7-13 points

Total Score: _____ / 32

Comments:

- **Strengths:**
- **Areas for Improvement:**

iii. Sample Assignment:

“Gathering Threads: The Annotated Bibliography”

As I stepped into the fog of research, trying to find the sun,
I knew not the depths of the chasms of sprawling word tapestries.

Initial understanding? Overwhelming.

Tentatively plucking sources, like wildflowers in the lea.

Then challenging me, the mountains of doubt —
Which to trust? What voices to hear? Will mine contribute?

Sifting through biases, like sand in a sieve,

I found the patience and time — and time and time more —
To allow understanding the room to grow
Noting importance for my future writing endeavors

Then, like nature's puzzle, I found the pieces.
Connecting them to my thoughts
Every piece in its perfect place

To do this again? I'd cast my net wider
To find more and more and more

And now I find myself out of the fog
In a clearing with a path forward to my words

C. Implications and Assessment

Ultimately, this reflection process, including autoethnography, should strengthen the students' relationship to the writing and research process. While students have historically had more freedom in their PREP Responses, there is a lack of autoethnographic-specific assignments. Using autoethnography as a means to keep a pathway of communication open between students and teacher aligns with engaged pedagogy, while allowing students to express their unique voices in an academic setting.

At the end of the term, the students will have a compilation of thirty-six poetic inquiries that they will compile into a portfolio for submission. As an assignment to finish the course, in order to promote and foster the community that has hopefully been established throughout the school year, students will participate in a book binding day where they bind their collection of poetic inquiries into a book they can keep. How this

book is bound and decorated will be up to them, and they have the freedom to be as literal or as abstract about the definition of “book” as they wish. This methodology keeps this assignment in line with the notion of autoethnography as engaged pedagogy because students are able to continue to express and incorporate themselves into their portfolio. As Chase Nordengren notes, “students do better when they feel in control of their learning” (Nordengren 18) and have the ability to include their own experiences and preferences into their work. In addition to a portfolio in some kind of book form, students will then participate in a poetry reading day. On this day, the classroom will be transformed with a makeshift stage and microphone, dimmed lights, and students will snap at the finish of each poem. Students will choose, from their portfolio, a poem or two to read aloud to their peers.

Neither of these assignments will be graded. In fact, as Hadley J. Ferguson explores in her “Journey in Ungrading,” she “was moving away from seeing [her] role as being the single authority in the room” (Ferguson 195) with the sole power to dole out a grade. She found that ungraded assessments “required effort and engagement, [but] provided the students with a safe environment in which to work” (Ferguson 209). In reference to the aforementioned portfolio and poetry reading, I want that safe environment for the students, and for the assessments themselves to go beyond the teacher/student relationship and be more of a conversation among peers where we are all collaborating toward a common goal (Giraldo 112). This will further benefit the students’ relationship to writing as they find their written and spoken voices are valued in an engaged classroom where their unique perspectives are celebrated. Their written

autoethnographies become spoken autoethnographies to manifest the actions of engaged pedagogy in an engaged classroom.

VI. Conclusion

Reflecting back to my initial question, why are we taught to write our lived experiences out of our writing? Perhaps it is because of tradition and maintaining some kind of academic status quo. Using autoethnography as engaged pedagogy, specifically in the high school classroom, illustrates what can happen when we give ourselves the permission to allow our experiences to influence our writing. That is, students are more engaged with their writing, have better relationships to the writing process, and form deeper, more meaningful connections with assignments as well as instructors as they cultivate a classroom of inclusion and understanding.

As other scholars of autoethnography, such as Michael Barr, have shown, similar results occur in undergraduate and graduate level courses, so one can conclude that similar results would happen at the high school level as well. This conclusion does have its limitations as I have not yet taught this proposed curriculum, but my hypothetical predictions are supported by both educational theories and literature, and I expect similar results when implementing autoethnography as engaged pedagogy in my own classroom. For continued study, I plan to implement this curriculum with future students in the upcoming school year as a case study to test the real-world implications of my hypotheses. First, the students will be asked if they are aware of autoethnography, then taught what it is. Then, the students will follow the curriculum and assignments as outlined above and reflect on a more autoethnography-heavy curriculum at the end of the school year. They will reflect on their engagement and how they felt about their writing assignments as compared to previous writing assignments in other English classes. My recommendation is for other educators and curriculum instructors to modify my practical

application as needed and then apply it in their own classrooms to study the results. In order to further study my hypotheses, implementing this curriculum in a high school setting is paramount as there is a lack of data surrounding high school classes using autoethnography as a form of engaged pedagogy.

The implications of this hypothetical curriculum encompass students, teachers, curriculum developers, and writers of varying levels. If we can shed the tradition that academic writing needs to be cold and detached and devoid of the personal, we can revolutionize writing from the very beginning of when students are taught how to write academically. For students, this has the ability to instill confidence in their writing by telling them that their voices and experiences matter and are important to the things they write. For teachers, using autoethnography as engaged pedagogy can foster a classroom environment of mutual respect and understanding and open new channels of inclusive communication between them and their students. And for curriculum writers, the implications are such that they should be mindful of creating curriculum that empowers teachers to achieve and maintain these relationships to writing and their students through integrating autoethnography in their curriculum designs. My hope is that individuals in the field of education, and specifically English education, can use the idea of autoethnography as engaged pedagogy to further instill and cultivate a love for writing and a love for the self.

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