Toward "Good Enough Methods" for Autoethnography in a Graduate Education Course: Trying to Resist the Matrix with Another Promising Red Pill

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Educational research suggests that the response biases of educators can negatively influence student performance and aptitude (Blanchett 2006; Bloom 2001; Darity et al. 2001; Gordon 2005; and Skiba et al. 2000). This article introduces "good enough methods" for autoethnography as an alternative approach to this problem. Luttrell (2000, 13) conceptualizes "good enough methods" researchers as those seeking to understand and appreciate difference and accept errors often made because of their blind spots and intense involvement. Evidence of this approach via autoethnography is provided here from cases of graduate student-practitioners and their Intergroup/Intercultural Education professor. Moreover, the article highlights (a) a connection of autoethnography to research in Education, (b) five key decisions of a "good enough methods" approach to autoethnography, and (c) how this approach can be applied to expose and address educator biases relating to "the matrix" (Hill-Collins 1990) of race, class, and gender.

Cypher: You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix [social structures for masking domination and oppression] is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss. I don't want to remember nothing [I want dysconsciousness]. Nothing. And I want to be rich, someone important, like an actor.

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He [Morpheous, the *prophecy-er* or professor] lied to us, Trinity. He tricked us. If he'da told us the truth, we woulda told him to shove that red pill [pill of critical consciousness].

Trinity: That's not true, Cypher; he set us free [to challenge ourselves to engage reflexive thoughts and actions].

Cypher: Free? You call this free? All I do is what he tells me to do. If I had to choose between that and the Matrix, I choose the Matrix [to live in an ignorance maintained by social structures for masking domination and oppression].

Trinity: The Matrix isn't real [ignorant bliss builds false consciousness and if left unexposed, then potentially all human participants suffer en route to complete inexistence].

Dialogue from popular contemporary film, *The Matrix* (part 1 of 3).

REFRAMING A PROBLEM

After nine years of learning, teaching, and researching in academia about the intersections of race, class, gender, and education, do you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss. Although my students and I inherit a host of privileges and problems, the race, class, and gender nexus comprises a *matrix of domination* (Hill-Collins 1990, 226; i.e., the matrix) that is particularly poignant, insidious, and yet difficult to resist in teaching and teacher education courses. Educational research suggests that biased responses of educators can negatively influence student performance and aptitude (Blanchett 2006; Bloom 2001; Darity et al. 2001; Gordon 2005; Skiba et al. 2000).

Blanchett (2006, 27) contends that we must research how White privilege and racism create and maintain inequity and oppression at six levels (e.g., the individual, institutional, educational, research, policy, and practice levels) "to develop appropriate strategies and interventions to eradicate these practices." She argues unequivocally for the necessity of graduate education courses in this effort, "above all, assisting teachers and teacher candidates in deconstructing issues of White privilege and racism should decrease the likelihood that these issues will negatively influence teachers' decisions" (Blanchett 2006, 27). This article introduces "good enough methods" for autoethnography as an alternative approach to these issues.

Luttrell (2000, 13) conceptualizes "good enough methods" researchers as those seeking to understand and appreciate difference and to accept errors often made because of their blind spots and intense involvement. The phrase "good enough methods" also speaks to a reflexive positioning that is not intended to celebrate mediocrity, but to acknowledge imperfections that surface despite meticulous

procedural implementation. Luttrell (2000) further elaborates upon and clarifies "good enough methods" and "reflexivity" in the following statements:

> A "good enough" researcher—does not shy away from frustrations, anxieties, and disappointments and seeks to understand (and is able to appreciate) the difference between one's self and another. . . . And they accept the mistakes they make—errors often made because of their blind spots and the intensity of their social, emotional, and intellectual involvement in and with the subject(s) of their research. I think of being reflexive as an exercise in sustaining multiple and sometimes opposing emotions, keeping alive contradictory ways of theorizing the world, and seeking compatibility, not necessarily consensus. Being reflexive means expanding rather than narrowing the psychic, social, cultural, and political fields of analysis (Luttrell 2000, 13).

Evidence of the "good enough methods" for autoethnography approach is provided here from cases of graduate student-practitioners and their Intergroup/Intercultural Education professor. The entire article draws upon critical, reflexive autoethnographic methods to highlight (a) a brief discussion of autoethnography research in education, (b) five key decisions of a "good enough methods" approach to autoethnography, and (c) how this approach can be applied to expose and address educator biases relating to "the matrix" (Hill-Collins 1990) of race, class, and gender.

Autoethnography Research and Its Connection to Education

In the new millennium, scholars in the disciplines of education and communication studies began to consider the pedagogical possibilities of autoethnography (Banks and Banks 2000, 235–236; Dalton 2003; Denzin 2003). In the book entitled *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture,* Denzin (2003) is credited with actually establishing the initial connection of performance ethnography, autoethnography, pedagogy, and theory. A synthesis of pertinent autoethnographic research in education and communication studies reveals at least three bridges connecting autoethnography to reflexivity, teaching, and learning (also see Banks and Banks 2000, 235–236): First, autoethnography may teach one about self in that it challenges our assumptions of normalcy, forces us to be more self-reflexive, and instructs us about our professional and personal socialization and how we participate in socialization at our schools. Second, it may teach one to write to practice and share emotions with audiences and to improve our craft for its own sake. Third, autoethnography may also teach one to inculcate and model by breathing self-critical attitudes, offering self-disclosure in teaching and learning and checking inequity and oppression in our classrooms.

Reed-Danahay (1997, 4) describes autoethnography further as enlisting transferable self-critique, because it invites "a rewriting of the self and the social." It is intended to ask questions like "How might my experiences of 'race,' 'class,' and 'gender' offer insights about my ability to address these issues in any given educational event/situation?" Rather than seeking to escape subjectivity, authors considering autoethnographic techniques should do so precisely because of the qualitative genre's capacity to engage first person voice, and to embrace the conflict of writing against oneself as he or she finds himself or herself entrenched in the complications of their pedagogical positions.

Tracing the Evidence of "Good Enough Methods" for Autoethnography

I have written elsewhere (Hughes 2005, 2007) about how my own Black, male, and working poor background influenced my "relationships, identifications, and exchanges" with the disproportionately large volume of self-identified White, middle-class female graduate student-practitioners with whom I study, teach, and learn (Luttrell 2000, 499). Yet, it is quite a bit more taxing process to trace my "thinking about research decisions in terms of what is lost and what is gained, rather than what might be ideal." Luttrell (2000, 499) argues for "good enough" research methods whereby, "researchers view their work as a series of ongoing realizations that lead to complex choices and decision-making." Tracing the steps of "these good enough decisions, is now, in my view, the nitty-gritty" (Luttrell 2000, 499) of locating researchers' reflexive purviews of the matrix.

DESCRIPTION OF CASES: TOWARD TRIANGULATION OF NARRATIVES

Evidence is provided from three sources of autoethnographic work (including my own) from two sections (Fall 2004 and Fall 2005) of an Intergroup/Intercultural Education course. Intergroup/Intercultural Education is part of the Masters core for the College of Education. Whether a teacher is currently employed in an Ohio school/district or not, she or he must complete the equivalent of six semester hours of coursework relevant to classroom teaching and/or an area of licensure in order to meet the requirements of the first renewal of a professional or associate license. Requirements for the second licensure renewal are more extensive for individuals who were admitted to an Ohio teacher licensure program at an approved college or university after July 1, 1998 or before January 1, 1998 and completed that program after July 1, 2002. These individuals must also complete the equivalent of a master's degree, or 30 semester hours of graduate credit in classroom teaching

and/or the area of licensure, with a minimum of six semester hours completed during the second renewal cycle. Hence, the issue of self-selection bias is decreased as the course draws a diverse group of students, many of whom initially prefer not to participate in dialogues about race, privilege, and "othering" (Kumashiro 2001). In the end, the two White female cases highlighted in the following were selected for three key reasons: (a) Each woman was among the most challenging graduate student-practitioners at the beginning of course during the semester in which she was enrolled; (b) each woman consistently experienced life as a White female teacher in a multiethnic, urban grade school, and (c) each woman represented veteran teachers (i.e., four or more years of experience teaching in grade schools) from separate semesters of the course.

The narratives and counternarratives of both graduate student-practitioners illustrate days in the lives of two White female, veteran teachers with self-identified legitimate authority in their urban grade schools affording them the rights to (a) communicate with prospective child advocates, and (b) to initiate student referral processes for special education, gifted education, and disciplinary actions. With the addition of the MA degree in Special Education, it is likely that both graduates will attract more venues for upward mobility in ways that may also increase the individual influences of their biases in grade schools.

DESCRIPTION OF CASES: CONSIDERING BASE-PEDAGOGY

Maggie from Fall 2005, and Jill[1] from Fall 2004 also represent students entering the course with a base-pedagogy of intergroup/intercultural education that seemed, initially, among the least congruent to my own. The term *base-pedagogy* is introduced here to name, succinctly, the pedagogy with which student-practitioners (graduates and undergraduates), as well as professors, bring with them when engaging subject-matter in-depth during a given course. Ideally, in my courses, the base-pedagogy I bring, as well as that which the students bring, will evolve with (a) reciprocation, (b) validation, (c) commitment to learning and unlearning, (d) the promise of confidentiality, (e) simultaneous active participation in learning and self-critique, and (f) sincere consideration and appreciation of counterevidence from reputable sources. The following five decisions, with corresponding evidence and consequence, suggest a challenge and subsequent change to our base-pedagogy. Each decision contributes to the larger argument supporting "good enough methods" for autoethnography. These methods challenge my students and me to resist the matrix by engaging self-critique and reflexivity, as well as by addressing the intentional and inadvertent complicity of educational privilege.

DECISION ONE: CONSIDER A REFLEXIVE LENS
TO RESIST OPPRESSION

The first decision was painful for my students and me for several reasons. First, it is difficult to locate and focus upon meaningful, personalized central questions and to engage productive diverse groups that challenge us to see and resist the matrix through those questions, all the while trying "not to separate [our] personal and professional philosophies" (Milner 2003, 205). Milner's work was useful here as he challenges preservice and inservice teachers, as well as teacher educators, to revisit whether we truly believe "oppression is wrong" and how we may or may not "display this belief at school" (Milner 2003, 205). He also challenges us to pursue inquiry and writing that motivates us to reconsider how to best portray our antioppressive selves through "discourse and actions outside of school resulting in a form of social justice" (Milner 2003, 205).

Throughout the sixteen-week-long course, I try to support diverse group work by creating in-class and out-of-class opportunities to engage the type of race, social class, and gender reflexive writing posited by Berry (2005). Moreover, group approaches to "critically engaged dialogue" (Milner 2003, 201), "intragroup or offstage conversation" (Taliaferro-Baszile 2005, 85), and "intergroup dialogue" (Gurin and Nagda 2006, 22) are also promoted in the course. These approaches work in tandem to involve (a) creating diverse groups based on self-identified experiences of the matrix of race, class, and gender; (b) helping groups identify and define individualized decision-making roles; and (c) finding in-class time and space to balance intragroup and intergroup socialization (Tatum 1997).

Third, dropping the editorial "we" of our public transcript (Scott 1990) was a challenge because my students and I were used to enlisting unsolicited representation to articulate any given point we are trying to make. Another problem for us involved the reality of being critically conscious while considering how we might be complicit in problems of pedagogy. Moreover, although most of us had engaged resistance (Giroux 1983) in the matrix before, it was too often not a transformative resistance or the form that people act out to begin "resisting domination in myriad ways" (Jennings and Lynn 2005, 20). Jennings and Lynn (2005) credit Bernal for naming the "transformative resistance" of social justice education (20–23) as separate from the resistance forms connected to patriarchal and racist motives (Bernal 1997; Solorzano and Bernal 2001). The authors remind us that "schools can and do serve as sites to resist domination," (Jennings and Lynn 2005, 21) and schools may also serve as sites where educators concerned about social inequality can encourage forms of opposition that challenge inequities in schooling and democratic society (Giroux 1983).

Maggie

There are a few black teachers in our district and they certainly mingle with whites—they don't' have a choice! Of course there are tons of different ethnicities in our district. . . . Where I teach, has racial issues that plague the school. . . . It is certainly visible to me that there is not much black and white racial mixing, which is a shame . . . one would think there would be more racial segregation and issues [where I grew up] because it is considered part of "The South." I live in [a place] comprised mostly of white middle class people. . . .I've sat in class week after week pondering about the beginnings of racism. How did it seep into my psyche if I have been friends with (and surrounded by) non-W hites all my life?

Jill

I took a survey of eight Black teachers, and eight White teachers to understand the point of view of teachers persuaded by different ethnic backgrounds. . . . I also took a survey of eight Black and eight White parents to determine their position on the idea of ethnic diversity and education and [discrimination]. . . . As I stated [previously] in in my autoethnography, I have worked with different ethnic groups for approximately eight years. I have, only now, come across the idea of reflexive thinking when working with students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. . . . I was able to learn a lot about myself and my peers . . . . I would like to say that I am not resistant to change, but I guess that I just did not know how to change or where to start. My classmates helped me with this element. They were talking; all I had to do was listen . . . and make an attempt to comprehend the changes I needed to make in my thinking.

Professor H

I entered class feeling somewhat ill. I gathered my notes and myself and began the lecture portion of the course that day by saying, "Alright, let's try to get through this." Maggie replied abruptly, relatively loudly, and with a half-smile, "What's the matter, you aren't prepared?" I immediately responded, "That's an interesting question, which leads me to ask 'Why do so many White people suggest that I'm not prepared for my job?' I'm certainly prepared for today," I maintained. "We're discussing chapters from the book that I wrote!" Students self-identifying as "White" and "of color" in her assigned diverse discussion group raised their hands, as did others throughout the class. Most of the class responded unequivocally: "Because you're a Black man." Maggie's face turned red and she refused to talk to me for the rest of class that evening. I learned from a trusted member of her class group, "She said, 'He better not come and try to talk to me today about anything else; I am so mad at him.'" Maggie, who from my purview had been rude to me that day and a

few days of class before then, was now livid and no longer eager to discuss the tough issues, but now she was "dreading class," partially due to my previous response, partially due to the Uptown Race Riot. It is paradoxical that only 1–2 weeks before today's class, we experienced the Uptown Race Riot, which was international news, and we delved deeply into a course discussion of response bias through Swim and Stangor's (1998) description of Hits (e.g., I respond as if I was discriminated against and I was), Misses (e.g., I respond as if I wasn't discriminated against, but I was), False Alarms (e.g., I respond as if I was discriminated against, but I wasn't) and Correct Rejections (I respond as if I wasn't discriminated against, and I wasn't). A week later, Maggie reflected upon the incident on her after class comment (ACC) sheet with the following remarks:

Maggie on 10/20/05—Regarding Class on 10/09/05

I was dreading class today . . . after the riots, I was dreading class. . . . You really embarrassed me today when you basically accused me of a prejudice statement. The reason I asked if you weren't prepared was b/c of what you said *prior* to that (something to the effect of): "just trying to get through this." I think what you felt I was accusing you of was a *total miss*! [Actually, it would have been a false alarm.] I guess the reason I was so embarrassed is b/c I'm taking this class very seriously. I talk about it constantly to my friends a+ students-black + white. I am trying so hard to unlearn those stupid prejudices. . . . I appreciate why you thought I was saying that b/c you've had lots of Whites say that but you were absolutely wrong. It was what you said before that- + I only asked you what was bothering you b/c you looked upset. That was a Shitty Miss Dr. _____

I decided to reply not only to her, but to the entire class via e-mail as I attempted to model how to confront, rather than ignore, conflict productively. This decision proved to be one of the defining moments of the course as it seemed to set the stage for meeting the other challenges of autoethnographic research.

Professor H's Reply on 10/09/05

My brain worked in a way tonight that triggered a teachable moment. It was more of an implicit association/critical pedagogical trigger. It wasn't a false alarm, hit, or miss, because Maggie's comment triggered another general overall question in my head, not about her motives, but about student motives and particularly White student motives outside of her who have asked me the same question. It didn't trigger me to even consider whether Maggie's response was a hit, miss, or false alarm. Oftentimes, my students' comments trigger other thoughts and general questions in my head that I feel may be worthwhile teachable moments to pursue for all of us. Please know that I am not feeling your comments are signs of racial prejudice in those times where your words enlist responses from me that link to another experience of mine. I think your thoughts and my triggers might actually enhance our educational setting at that moment . . . at least most of the time. Tonight, I think it let some of the oxygen out of the room. Let's continue to work together

and teach while we learn and learn while we teach. I apologize to Maggie and all of you for not clarifying the issue earlier [in class].

Except for the writing of a few White undergraduates on the qualitative component of anonymous end-of-course evaluations, I had never experienced any student being so blunt as to curse at or about me this way. The good news was that Maggie seemed to want to get better at teaching her urban Black students by exploring prejudices within herself. She actually decided to focus her autoethnography upon the more specific and personalized thesis "Where does racial prejudice originate in my life and how might it influence my treatment of my urban, Black high school English students?" She accepted my apology and appeared to appreciate my mass e-mail as she immediately began to participate in class again after initially giving me and her group members "the silent treatment." I now understand her initial response better and our subsequent transactions continue to teach me about checking my own response biases, professorial privileges, and penalties.

DECISION TWO: CONSIDER EXPERIENCES OF PRIVILEGE AND PENALTY WITH A REFLEXIVE LENS

The deception and contradiction, ignorance and denial of interlocking systems of oppression (including race, class, and gender as particularly dominant and oppressive) all comprise what Patricia Hill-Collins (1990) names *the matrix of domination (i.e., the matrix)*. She criticizes each scholarly position that only identifies the oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental, while classifying all others as less important in the matrix. For her, the matrix presents "few pure victims or oppressors" because an "individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression in which everyone lives" (Hill-Collins 1990, 230). For example, from her Black feminist standpoint, "white women are penalized by their gender, but privileged by their race" and "depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed" (Hill-Collins 1990, 224).

Cleveland (2006, 67) builds upon Hill-Collins (1990) work by having his students "unpack" or identify privileges on their own. As a self-identified Black male, often teaching as "other," Cleveland's (2006, 67) teacher education classroom addresses (a) ability privilege, (b) class privilege, (c) heterosexual privilege, (d) male privilege, and (e) White privilege. Three primary reasons are linked to the success of this approach: (a) avoiding "shame or blame;" (b) identifying that everyone is privileged in one way or another and, as a result, some more than others; and (c) informing students that, as a result of these privileges, we are all capable of oppressing others (Cleveland 2005, 67).

Maggie

The autoethnography lends itself to wondrous self-reflection, while doing research at the same time. . . . I have thought many times in my head horrid generalizations about certain students based on their skin color or socioeconomic status. I'm not sure if the prejudices I hold about Whites are as harmful . . . . Growing up in [the South] I was exposed to the prejudices of people called "white trash." This prejudice about what is presumably a poor white person stuck with me because I still hold those opinions . . . . If teachers are supposed to change the lives of the students they encounter, they need to be prepared for racial issues of every kind. I certainly was not prepared for this at [the university I attended]. I am personally trying to discover my White privilege, not enable it since learning of it in this class . . . . It is a songbird atop my shoulders singing a nasty tune that reminds me I have no idea what it is like to be a person of color.

Jill

White privilege is something that, as a White person, I take for granted. There are assumptions that were passed along to me as a White person. There assumptions I inherited, and continue to hold. I did not earn these privileges, and I have never understood the idea of ownership of these privileges before this point in time. Since I am White, and have been afforded these privileges, I have never before understood the absence of such privileges among other ethnic groups . . . . I do not think of myself as a racist, however, I have not, as a teacher, been aware of the difficulties that other ethnic groups may face . . . awareness of the problem is half the battle. As in a marriage, if one partner believes there is a problem, the other must listen, and attempt to understand or the marriage will become bitter and eventually end. This is also true between . . . other ethnicities and cultures.

DECISION THREE: CONSIDER MULTIPLE LEVELS OF EDUCATION EXPERIENCES WITH A REFLEXIVE LENS

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, 20) concur with the need to approach studies of the self from multiple levels of educational experience and with a reflexive lens: "The connection between autobiography and history must be apparent, the issues attended to need to be central to teaching and teacher education." Hill-Collins (1990) describes the matrix also as being experienced and resisted; taught and learned on three levels: "personal biography; group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions" (Hill-Collins 1990, 226–227). The group or community level of the cultural context is particularly important to reconsider as it seems to be a major social site for reproducing biased responses including the *hits*, *misses*, and *false alarms* mentioned previously (Swim and Stangor 1998). The connections of the

systemic level of social institutions to ourselves is examined by my students and me through critical literature reviews of empirical research, chiefly from academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles.

Maggie

My parents had just divorced, and Mom and I lived in the epitome of middle class. I was an only child, so I played with kids in the neighborhood. . . . My mom was a Godly woman that did not talk negatively about other races . . . . I was friends with everyone and did not think of what he [dad] had told me about "niggers," "spicks," or "gooks."

My White privilege is a topic I have thought about every day since reading McIntosh's [1989] piece . . . . It became apparent that I need to learn more when I did self-reflection to write my autobiography [personal biography component of the autoethnography assignment]. . . . I knew the racism comments my father made were wrong and ridiculous, so when and more importantly how, did my prejudices solidly form and become readily accessible in my everyday life? I was anxious and curious to read scholarly journals and get an answer to my plaguing question . . . . Gordon [2005] goes on to tell how she tries to teach racial diversity more each semester she instructs at George Mason University. How lucky are those students!

Professor H

I thought my students' abilities to engage autoethnography as critical pedagogy was contingent upon their reading other White scholars identifying as White and female who were publishing self-critical educational research. I directed them to qualitative and quantitative, peer-reviewed journal articles by Laubscher and Powell (2003), Peggy McIntosh (1989), and Jenny Gordon (2005). As I estimated, my students were particularly affected by these scholars. Maggie emailed a message of hope to me alongside a bleak message of struggle as she delved into the critical literature review component of "good enough" autoethnographic research:

Thanks for taking the time to help. You're the first prof that's truly HELPED. I'm currently back at [the library] and able to breathe. And you'll be happy to know that I don't feel like stepping in front of a bus at the moment. We'll see when I actually go try and hunt these things down [peer-reviewed journal articles] upstairs [in the library].

Jill

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, however, I grew up in . . . a small suburban area . . . north of the downtown area . . . . There was no cultural group with which my

family identified itself. We considered ourselves to be middle class Americans . . . .
My parents were staunch Presbyterians, and we went to church every week . . . .
There were no Blacks [at church] and it was known that there would be no Blacks
. . . . It was 1970 and the idea of having Black students bussed in from a downtown
area school was beyond the thinking of my parents or any of my friends' parents . . . .
I do remember a distinct feeling of anger in the air. The busing never happened and
after the night of the school board meeting, our lives went on as usual. The only time
I had seen a Black person had been at Eastland mall. . . . I never knew a Black person,
but somehow, in my head, I had the idea that black people were not as good as me . . . .
There can be no improvement in this area without continuous development in teacher
reflection on such subjects (Milner, 2003) . . . . There are a number of students of color
that are not succeeding in pre-school through twelfth grade (Milner, 2003). Several
issues must be considered. Among these are the obligation of race deliberation in
cultural circumstances for both White teachers [like me] and teachers of other ethnic
identities. Sometimes there are racial and cultural differences between teachers and
students which could create difficult learning conditions . . . . The question[s] that this
study intends to pursue . . . Are Black students and their parents better understood
by teachers of their own ethnicity? Should teachers [like my Black colleagues and
me] dealing with students from an ethnic background different from their own be
encouraged to seek a better understanding of the differences? Does [my] ethnicity
make a difference, or is it the differences we all experience as individuals, rather
than ethnicities, that truly make a difference?

DECISION FOUR: CONSIDER TRIANGULATING
NARRATIVES WITH A REFLEXIVE LENS

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, 20) maintain that "sufficient evidence must be gar-
nered that readers will have no difficult recognizing the authority of the scholarly
voice, not just its authenticity." Triangulation of narrative sources of evidence
involves gaining evidence from at least three sources addressing the same issue.
Moreover, as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, 20) suggest, a triangulation of "themes
should be evident and identifiable across the conversation represented or the nar-
rative represented." Preferably, at least one of those three sources shouldn't share
ethnicity, class, or gender classification with the author. Because narratives are
flawed with subjectivity, evidence from narrative triangulation eventually charged
me to learn to be less concerned about whether students were lying, but more
tuned in to "gaps and inconsistencies and associations" (Luttrell 2000, 14).

Dialogic/dialectic encounters (Gurin and Nagda 2006) can expose the type of
gaps, inconsistencies, and associations that are tantamount to productive triangu-
lation of narratives. In fact, hearing the audio and reading transcripts of these trian-
gulated narratives also helped me to rethink and reconstruct my own educational
story to share with interested audiences. Similarly, member-checking involves

asking for the critique and permission of outside participants whose stories are shared as part of your story. Triangulation can also be added to member-checking to challenge an author to compare/contrast her or his interpretations and analyses against at least two additional sources comprising both congruent and dissonant voices. For example, Maggie and Jill were sent previous drafts of this article to review and critique.

Although Jill didn't offer any specific advice, Maggie offered a powerful and invaluable critique of the original manuscript. She felt that my argument initially polarized me versus White female graduate student-practitioners, which was certainly not my intention. She also noted two spaces where I had mistakenly left her real name in the original manuscript. Her constructive criticism forced me into several drafts that revisited and edited my underlying assumptions and dichotomies. As I had hoped, at the dawns of Fall 2004 and 2005, the bulk of my students and I were beginning to find additional promising evidence of the utility of autoethnography in the social battle against grade-school inequities. By researching our fallible, but educable "selves," most of us began to acquiesce to the ever-humbling, yet exciting and hopeful episodes of students and their families becoming the teachers.

Maggie

> This course has offered many blessings, including [Joe]. I told him just last week I am not losing him as a friend when we are finished. He has to keep my White privilege in check. . . . Since day one of this experience [autoethnography], I have spoken to my students about what I am learning. I have shared with several students many of our discussions . . . . I could not help but talk about it with "D." D is a Black emotionally disturbed junior in my homeroom and English class. I spoke with him about the way Whites rudely (usually unknowingly) word their questions to Blacks about silly things like hair, tanning, etc.

Jill

> I have felt safe in my own thinking that racism was a problem of the past, and as long as I did not have a problem with students and parents of various ethnicities, there must not be a problem. . . . The survey I completed for this study shows that, for my past years of teaching, I may have been a more effective teacher by reaching beyond my own ideas, and asking others (especially those of a different ethnic backgrounds from my own) how they felt. . . . The results of the survey show that . . . of eight White teachers surveyed, all of them did not feel there was a direct need for teachers to reflect on, or become better educated on differences of ethnic background . . . . According to the surveys filled out by Black parents . . . all eight

. . . stated that they felt the need for White teachers to become better educated in the area of ethnicity. . . . Seven answered yes and only one answered no stating that they felt discriminated against by White teachers . . . . Black parents also reported feeling that their children were discriminated against by others of different backgrounds during school hours . . . . Only one out of eight White teachers reported suspicion of discrimination from Black parents. . . . None of the White parents surveyed felt they were treated differently by Black teachers . . . . Seven out of eight Black parents said they felt they were treated differently by White teachers.

DECISION FIVE: CONSIDER BALANCING STRUGGLE AND HOPE WITH A REFLEXIVE LENS

In 1993, Paulo Freire, an esteemed intergroup/intercultural educator, maintained "there is no possibility for teaching without learning . . . as well as there is no possibility for learning without teaching" (Wink 2005, 85). From Freire's purview, the type of pedagogy that engages the struggle to resist oppression (Freire 1970) in the matrix involves (a) reciprocity among teachers and learners who begin (b) reading into and cross-checking individual experiences of school-related privileges and penalties. In his *Pedagogy of Hope*, the late Freire (1996) also challenges educators to reconsider hope and struggle as reciprocal actions that are integral for constructing pedagogy to resist the matrix:

> The idea that hope alone will transform the world . . . is an excellent route to hope-lessness, pessimism, and fatalism. [T]he attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion . . . . Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope . . . dissipates, loses its bearing, and turns into hopelessness. One of the tasks of the serious progressive educator, through a serious, correct, political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be (Freire 1996, 8–10).

Closing remarks of Maggie and Jill reflect the necessity of teachers' deciding to pursue a balance in their lives of pedagogical struggle and hope as posited by Friere (1996, 8–10).

Maggie

> I have made a vow after this paper, the speech, countless hours of pondering my place in the world, and reading for the Literature Review that I will not ever be colorblind. I want to celebrate our differences in the classroom. I want my students to be comfortable with who they are. I do not hush their innocently rude comments

about other ethnicities. I stop my teaching and discuss it with them, and usually we come to the conclusion that their thought was a silly prejudice. . . . I am also excited to share that I have used the three-step process we learned in September to validate, commitment, and confidentiality. I simply listen to their story about how they feel they have been discriminated against, validate what they shared, and end with the commitment to never do that to them. I am devoted to my unlearning of prejudice and racism, for their sake and my own. . . . I am taking my brain places it has not been in thirty years. Now my thinking is unlearning too. And that is what change is all about . . . . Most importantly, I have admitted outright my White privilege and how I am humbled. Our [White teacher–Black student] relationship has developed wonderfully, I speculate partly because I give him hope about ethnic differences. He was one of the only people who asked how my speech [autoethnography presentation] went downtown! Awesome!

Jill

It is not without talking and listening that problems can be solved. Listening and understanding are two actions that I will use with parents and students of ethnically different backgrounds from my own . . . . I learned the most from my project and will share my findings with other teachers so they may see where they need to make changes as well. I hope to continue working at the urban public school where I am now employed and I hope to use my new-found knowledge to do a better job. In the future, I will do a lot more listening and will try to use what I have learned to make myself a better teacher and a better person.

DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Challenges and Possibilities

Pedagogical change through autoethnography can be certainly as painstaking, and yet illuminating, as demonstrated here. It is a pedagogical change requiring my students and me to try another promising red pill of research to face the intersection of privilege and penalty, race, class, and gender. My students and I must stand at that intersection long enough to inspire critical pedagogic tools for us to take back into the "real" world—to positively change our work with urban youth suffering from inequity via the effects of poverty, sexual, and racial discrimination. This change necessarily involves continuous development in teacher reflexivity and positionality if schooling is to improve in this area (Milner 2003).

One substantiated fear of my "good enough methods" approach to autoethnography was articulated well by scholars of Foundations and Communication Studies, and Africana Diaspora Studies. It is a fear stemming from the concern that teaching White students to be equitably critical of various forms of privilege will

move even more of them to feel "let off the hook" for White privilege at worst; or it will diminish the insidious penalty of White privilege in their eyes, at best. Yet, there is decreasing evidence of this phenomenon in my courses since I began to apply this method. In fact, even my most challenging White students appear to become more obligated to see how they benefit from White privilege and to use critical pedagogy to transfer the parts of White privilege they understand into social justice education. The course is never easy to teach as students and I tend to prefer the comfort of living in the matrix without focusing upon the problems and privileges that bind and blind our less reflexive selves to it.

Gurin and Nagda (2006) allude to the need for exploring reflexivity and complicity via balanced and "carefully conducted research" methods:

> Qualitative methods, in particular, by conveying the complexity of experiences . . . and countering any tendency to overgeneralize findings to all racial/ethnic groups, can provide a richer understanding of the diversity of experiences. Carefully conducted qualitative research can be a source for generative theory, while quantitative research can help to test theories through statistical models (Gurin and Nagda 2006, 23).

"Good enough methods" for autoethnography unveiled the type of complexity and countergeneralization that helps my students and me to begin resisting the matrix. It moved us through the painful process of seeking and finding our liberation in this democracy as being interwoven and interdependent. It moved us to research a space where we preferred not to look—within ourselves. "Good enough methods" for autoethnograpy worked for us to check biases while working to (a) increase validation, commitment, and openness to change; (b) increase "knowledge, reasonableness, and empathy" (Snauwaert and Hughes 2005); and (c) increase an overall sense of one's own ability within the scope of teacher leadership to battle complexities of oppression in the classroom.

Our plight illustrates some distinct and specific challenges of "good enough methods" for autoethnography approach: (a) accepting and appropriating subjectivity in one's own pedagogy rather than feeling compelled to hide it or to quantify it, (b) dealing with the emotional difficulty of writing against the "self," (c) finding and confronting one's own authentic voice, and (d) coping with the vulnerability of revealing your old self and "new-self narratives" (Anders et al. 2005; Hughes 2005, 125). Our plight also illustrates some possibilities of applying authethnographic research in graduate education course as it can (a) promote more reflexive questioning of the curriculum, unit plans, and lesson plans to reveal and battle influences of race, sex, class, inequity, and other outcomes of biased responses and favoritism; (b) promote teacher leadership by enlisting our students, our colleagues, and ourselves into constructive self-critique; and (c) promote a move even beyond critical/analytic, reflexive interpretation to action (Shultz 2004).

Closing Thoughts: A Future for "Good Enough" Autoethnographic Research

My students and I initially had all of the answers for educational outcomes pegged simplistically as a singular problem of race, class, or gender, and we had published research and practical experience in the classroom to back our preliminary claims. We could then locate ourselves and our detrimental pedagogy outside of whichever one we didn't want to see as a problem of ourselves. Certainly as a self-perceived victim of race and class discrimination in school, issues with gender were less of a problem for me and rarely on my radar; just as my students peg class and/or gender as the culprit and write off White privilege as a thing of the past and undoubtedly absent in their reflective list of pedagogical errors.

Through autoethnography, my students and I are challenged to question mere reflection or looking back, per se, at what was done pedagogically. Reflection alone seems now to take us to one necessary, but insufficient, place. Conversely, a reflexive lens challenges us to question taken-for-granted knowledge and how the matrix adversely influences pedagogical decision-making. My students often lament, as did I initially, "Before I knew about how all of this domination stuff creeps into my classroom, I didn't have to worry about what to do about it." Our blissful, naive selves in this way, without a reflexive self-critique, ultimately limits our ability to optimize the potential of the students we serve as "other."

Paradoxically, some complex combination of individual decision-making actually renders my students and me oppressors and yet oppressed in the matrix of race, class, and gender. Autoethnography challenges us to open ourselves to the type of self-criticism that promotes the examination of how we are all, at least on occasion, complicit in misleading "others" and vulnerable to being misled by our categorical peers in the matrix. Moreover, "good enough" autoethnographic methods charge us to problematize our decisions and nudge us to check how our biases may negatively influence our research and teaching of perceived "others."

The decision-making of "good enough" autoethnographic methods presented here locate (a) the potential for questioning how race, class, and gender comprises the matrix of domination where individuals reproduce response biases; (b) the potential for exposing the seeming immutability and yet invisibility of response biases; and (c) the possibilities of a reflexive self to deconstruct privilege with its influences on response biases. In the end, I find that my students and I are also challenged, indeed, to agree with Cypher. "Ignorance is bliss," until one can genuinely use reflexivity to find herself or himself complicit in structuring decision-making processes that "expand educational opportunities" for dominant groups and "constrain educational opportunities" for oppressed groups (O'Connor and Fernandez 2006, 10). Through "good enough methods" for autoethnography, my students and I critique personal roles in reproducing ignorance, and the denial of the dynamics of expansion and constraint; privilege and penalty. With this red

pill of research, complete bliss in the matrix could be viewed as a pyrrhic victory—a personal win with too great of a cost to intergroup/intercultural education.

NOTE

1. All names of participants and person or place names offered by them were replaced by pseudonyms.

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