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| 800 Ways of Knowing |
| Reflective Analysis |
| Final Thoughts |
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| **Ellen Nosal** |
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1. How would you have described your way(s) of knowing, learning, and thinking when you began this class? 2. As you consider your autobiography/personal history, what factors -- personal, experiential, familial, socio-cultural, historical, and/or disciplinary – have influenced your ways of knowing? 3. How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher? 4 How would you describe your current way of knowing? 5. What are some “ways of knowing” that are predominant in your field? 6. What are the implications of your reflections on questions 3 and 4 above for your personal and professional growth during your doctoral study?

My journey into practice and research has been one of pools, lakes, and oceans of depth of knowledge. I have traversed these waters not with smooth sailing, but with a half drowned dog paddle. Feeling ill prepared and uncertain about my abilities as I entered this area of coursework, I have learned a great many things. It is with these thoughts in mind; I now swim more confidently and in the wake of others before me.

Beginning in GMU’s PhD process has been an education in situated cognition, I felt thrown into the middle of an unknown ocean. The drowning feeling gave into to sink or swim and I quickly resolved to learn to swim. My experiences were nil in the area of research and the ideals of this community of practice and as my courses continued, my learning curve grew exponentially. I came to this course with a narrow focus of understanding about thought processes and learning, but have left with a sense of wonder and a new passion for learning. Now in a comfortable stroke, I move to a new level of understanding and enrichment in my educational career.

As I look inward to my own thinking and learning, I must review my own concept of knowing. Growing up in a home of divorced and remarried parents, marring a man of divorced and remarried parents, I could tell you what I didn’t want. It was through these unconstructive experiences that I formed the relationships around me. My foundations of truth and understanding grew to expectance and tolerance and are passed to my children. My way of knowing, grew out of watching others make choices around me and looking at the effects on others around them. These factors sent me away to school from my family, to a career I am passionate about, the courage to move to other states, and to love another person completely. My way of knowing feels instinctive and I obey its every whim. I painfully learn lessons the times when I have ignored this knowing and regret my choice immediately. In applying this knowing to my coursework, I have had two very different experiences, but both have shown me the importance of trust and follow through. Many of the readings and presentations I have viewed instilled a drive to continue and believe I can accomplish my goals. In this time period I, have completed coursework for my major and minor, changed careers, and successfully completed the implied duties of wife and mother. As a PhD student, this course has given me direction and a glimpse of my knowing as related to technology. I have firm beliefs of how technology should be seen and used in schools and as part of my research and future career goals, I plan to bring these ideas to life and embed them in a technology plan for my school district. As a researcher, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of virtual worlds and their place in education. It will be my goal to bring together successfully.

My field of choice will be instructional technology and in reviewing the works of researchers and of programs already in progress, I see the foundations of knowing are in place. In speaking with Dr. Pricilla Norton, she discussed her way of know is a three step process. Dr, Norton points out “technology is a technique used to operate in my world.” She continues, “…a cluster of affordances or what does it support.” And finally she adds, “…embedded in situational cognition” . This way of knowing uses a computer as a tool for learning in an environment which offers constructive and meaningful comprehension of real world activities. I review this way of knowing with the readings and presentations form class.

The writings of Rene Descartes, at the beginning of the course, aided in my sinking feeling and his writing was difficult to understand and I had little to compare it to. However, with group discussions and getting viewpoints form others, I gained insight and began to have a connection with his material. I look to his writing now as a brave attempt to disturb the universe around him. I found a theme in my readings of a search for truth, and I relate that to my own experiences in seeking truth in my reality. Through Descartes’ writings, he tries to open minds and avenues for thought as exploration. His understanding of culture are formed by situated cognition and using the knowledge to form partnerships, and find acceptance. My experience grows in a review of *Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind*, where I related to the character of Roy. As he tries to explain to his wife and the military personal, he just has a feeling he should be at Devil’s Tower. This internal gauge of understanding and direction forms the basis of his way of knowing and I emulate this experience. My next exposure to a way of knowing moves through the work of Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. This view into to history gives explanations of how science changes in methodologies and discoveries over time. Kuhn has coined this drastic change in theory a paradigm. Kuhn shows science is not linear but a series of leaps and gaps in which discoveries alter the foundations of the scientific community. When the paradigms occur, new theories are proposed while the standards are challenged. For me this way of knowing looks to challenge a status quo. It is through a shake-up or shattering of existing theories that new ideas and concepts over time become the accepted method. As the journey through time continues we enter into the era of Jerome Bruner and his work, *The Culture of Education.* His work reveals antiquated methodologies in education which need to be revamped. He looks at the educational system as biased and filled with teacher preconceptions were educators subconsciously mold ideas from their previous experiences and cultures. In a chapter titled Culture, Mind and Education Bruner states, “It [education] is a complex pursuit of fitting a culture to the needs of its members and of fitting its members and their ways of knowing to the needs of the culture.” Bruner relates the classroom as a sub-culture of society with specificity to the people who reside in it. Bruner hopes for a transformation from students submit to the whims of the teacher to a cultured support network of learning. Finally, I move to looking at narrative as a way of knowing. This idea is vocalized in book edited by Nona Lyons and Vicki Kubler LaBoskey titled, *Narrative Inquiry in Practice.* This book demonstrates to effective use of storytelling as a way of knowing. Through narrative reflections shared with mentors, teachers helped themselves solve difficult problems in the classroom. Some problems were identified as methodologies and while others looked for advise in classroom management. Through the reflective writing and sharing process, teachers began to identify problem solving strategies. These successful reflections lead to better learning environments, and formed a strong community’s of practice for others to imitate.

Moving through this coursework and the readings, I find myself looking at my thinking with new direction. In listening to my committee members and the parade of scholars, who have given greatly of their time and knowledge, I look for my way of knowing as a foundation for the rest of my PhD career. In a former paper on ways of knowing, I researched Confucianism. Through this research, and readings I have discovered common waters of beliefs. I too look to better those around me with my actions and eventually my research. In my home, we cooperate to run a smooth household. In my workplace, I keep teachers moving forward with suggestions of technology and technological activities, and when thinking of a research agenda I look for games and simulations which will have a positive and educational long-term effect for the better of humanity.

In reviewing my own thoughts I focus on my way of knowing as like that of Roy. I know I have to be there. I am on a journey of discovery of my own learning and how best to increase the learning of others through the use of technology. As I continue to tread the waters of academia, I expect to narrow my ideas about what part technology will play in my techniques for learning. In the spirit of Descartes I will seek truth and use situated cognition to find meaning in my research, and like Confucius I will look to better the society around me, the best way I know how.

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