

Reflection - EDUC 800
Ways of Knowing
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This course is required of all Ph.D. in Education students and explores various ways of knowing. As a practicing IB teacher, I immediately associated this course with the Theory of Knowledge course in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and often referred to this course to my professional colleagues as “TOK for Doctoral Students.” The course, projects, readings, and discussions were broken down into explorations concerning several ways that people know things or lenses through which people see things. We discussed writers and readings using feminist lenses, a sociocultural lense, a scientific lense, a historical lense, a postcolonial lense, and finally a symbolic lense.

One of the required activities of the course was to keep a quotation journal as we completed the readings in Bruner, Whorf, Belenky, Goldberger, Harding, Ladson-Billings, Matsuda, Said, and others. This exercise allowed me to select quotations that I felt might be valuable to me in the future or struck a nerve and react to them. Sometimes I tied them to current things that were going on in my classroom, sometimes I react strongly against what I was reading as it went against my perceptions of knowledge and my personal “ways of knowing” and sometimes the reading made me expand my dimensions of belief or add another perspective to my learning. Although this journal was very time-consuming, it was also very rewarding as it took me on a tour of several types of knowledge.

During the course, I found that I was attracted most to postcolonial theory as a way of knowing. As the class was required to present group presentations on a topic, I joined that group and found that I connected with the “otherness” theory of Edward Said. I specifically became interested in the question of where the line is in the present and modern day between a colonizer and an occupier, especially in light of the United States and their military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan after September 11th and the political policies that I sometimes think allow the United States to justify their actions while condemning similar actions when done by other nations. In addition, the class was asked to find a research area for a final paper and I chose to explore the topic of why differences are often perceived as negative. To show the development of my thinking for this final paper, I have included the Topic Rationale I submitted for this paper as well as the Final Paper.