This book is about a network of women who as a collective and individuals can share their stories to indeed help themselves as well as others. Our stories assist in the telling and retelling of important events. Reflecting on these events allow the ‘processing’, ‘figuring out’ and ‘inquiring’, leading to behavioural actions to change situations. The fact that we are women unites us as we have common elements with our roles both within academia, in our families, and in society.

The women in this study share their narratives in an open dialogue. Their journey into and out of academia is constructed from “a metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The space enables the authors to capture and communicate the emotional nature of lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The self-studies explore the changes in social and contextual approaches that are attached to working and studying in higher education. The book provides a narrative of the “ups” and “downs” that female academics have individually and collectively encountered while moving “in” and “out” of academia.

Making these stories known establishes a sense of collaboration and community. This action serves to perpetuate and further develop the established pedagogy and look to improve practice. A community practice seeks to locate the learning in the process of co-participation (building social capital) and not just within individuals (Hanks, 1991). It allows females to come together to share experience and discuss ways forward.
Being “In and Out”: Providing Voice to Early Career Women in Academia
Being “In and Out”: Providing Voice to Early Career Women in Academia

Edited by

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and

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It is with considerable pleasure that I write this Foreword. In the first instance the theme of the book as well as the rich chapter contributions resonate with my own interest in womens’ experiences in the academy. Secondly and importantly, the insights and struggles voiced in this book are a timely reminder of critical role of the professoriate in mentoring, supporting and developing new colleagues. Learning to be an academic as well as learning what it means to undertake academic work present challenging times for those who move into scholarly world of higher education. It is in the quiet spaces between the relentless demands of the university and the loneliness of ‘newness’, that the collegiality, friendships and support networks can be fostered. Evident across the chapters of this book are the reflective tales of struggle, compromise and successes of early career academics as they negotiation their way in and around the academy, academic work and academic colleagues. It is about being ‘in’ the academy while simultaneously feeling or being on the ‘out’ as newcomers to a world immersed in opaque traditions, rites and rituals. The voices presented are candid in the portrayal of their own trajectories and quest for entry and acceptance in academia. The rawness of the experiences carved across the chapters of this book offers a unique insight into the barriers and opportunities that early career women encounter. Interwoven throughout the chapters is an account of how new entrants to higher education seek to understand the turbulent and at times confronting contemporary university environment.

Drawing on the metaphor of flight (Schwab, 1970), each of the contributors considers how her own personal story, or journey, mirrors the undulating momentum of a flight that can involve paths and pathways that are not necessarily linear. In their own positioning of their identities and career trajectories, the narratives penned by the women academics offer insights into their myriad struggles as well as enduring joys of their varying flights out of one field and into another. The strength of this book lies in the emergence of personal narratives that speak to and speak about the contested spaces in academia and the strategies women adopt in the quiet spaces they occupy (Fitzgerald, 2014).

The book brings together female academics who are predominately ‘in’ or ‘out’ of Australia. Importantly, the accounts presented are from women new to academia. Each of the authors highlight their unique professional and academic backgrounds and bring to their stories a diverse heritage that provides a refreshing perspective on their personal exploration of identity and agency. A key thread running through the various narratives is the power and potential of connections and networks. What has occurred in the bringing together of women across geographical and institutional spaces has been the creation connections and networks based on authorship. Importantly, the richness of this book lies in the cacophony of voices of women who
refuse to lose themselves in the hubris of academia and who rightfully claim their own space.

In many ways the narratives presented are not dissimilar to those inscribed in *Women leaders in higher education: Shattering the myths* (Fitzgerald, 2014). Neither new nor senior academic women position themselves as powerless. Co-mingled in their stories across both books is the optimism that the power of women lies in their independence and the uncertainty that their presence creates. Collective voices make possible opportunities to agitate for change. But the Faustian exchange is that while women may agitate for change in the gendered academic environment, there is an ongoing pressure to conform to institutional norms and practices in order to thrive and survive.

The stories in this collection are personal, reflective and complex and reveal multiple ways in which women work to sustain self, family and career. But this is not a book that offers a lament about the gendered academy and gendered work. Although the voices that permeate the chapters of this book send strong, confident and assertive messages about the challenges women face as they navigate the complex environment of higher education. But what I also hear is a challenge to senior administrators and senior colleagues to consider ways in which they might nurture young, inexperienced yet ambitious women academics. Fledgling academics, however tentative their flight into and around academia, are potentially the future professoriate and it will be their role to act as the critics and conscience of society.

Tanya Fitzgerald
Professor of Educational Leadership, Management and History
La Trobe University, Melbourne
1. BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION LOOKING IN AND LOOKING OUT

Jumping In and Jumping Out

When you start teaching at a university, there is no handbook on what to do (Mueller, 2003).

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

We first met as researchers at a conference. Over a coffee break we shared experiences of being younger female academics. Our stories were similar. We soon realised that our discomforts amongst the discourse of academia were shared.

In our own personal observations we had noticed a shift from the rawness of our own experiences and moving towards noticing practices of women’s participation in universities. There is a need to understand the practices and heightened awareness of the need to decipher, decode and begin to understand further the rhetoric that is academia.

Although we were both aware of reports that highlighted that more women than men were enrolling in universities in Australia and New Zealand, and particularly in professional schools such as law, medicine, education, and business management, we were mildly discomforted because we recognised that numbers of women as deans, professors, senior administrators, heads of school and (fulltime and permanent) lecturers were not subject to the same statistical shifts. (Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010, p. 7)

As Fitzgerald & Wilkinson (2010) reflect in their considered work on gender, leadership and higher education, there is some resonance with the complicated intertwining of academia and the complexities that is required when one is an academic. The challenges and complexities are not just situated within the higher education structures and policy practices and implementations; there is indeed a layering of what women do to women in this environment.

This reflection is not about, nor has it ever been about, exclusivity, gender bias or rights. It is about moving forward, is supporting one another to be the best we can be in an environment that is at the best of times turbulent to maneuver. This book is about a network of women who as a collective and individuals can share their
stories to indeed help themselves as well as others. Our stories assist in the telling and retelling of important events. Reflecting on these events allow the ‘processing’, ‘figuring out’ and ‘inquiring’, leading to behavioural actions to change situations.

Our reflections offer embodied ways of looking at our work as academics and how we undertake our multiple roles within this context. The fact that we are women unites us as we have common elements with our roles both within academia, in our families, and in society. All of us are juggling multiple identities and roles within our personal and professional worlds. All of us value sharing. Our connecting “with self and the identities that we carry merges past, present and future, histories and memories. It is not about self-importance, self-reference or perfecting self” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 107), rather it is about ongoing self-awareness, monitoring, and evaluation.

All of the authors of this book are familiar with academia. All ‘are’ or ‘have’ gone through the process of undertaking doctoral research. Some authors are working within the academy in different roles – part time, full time, causally, researching, teaching, administering, leading, or supporting. All authors feel aspects of being “in” and “out”. The feeling of being “in” and “out” comes from “newcomers who join an established and homogeneous group” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 85) and in some ways the tension of being new is not visible due to the camouflage of having been in academia previously and being able to act the part. It is the quiet spaces between the pressures and familiarity of academia and that allows a community of women to form.

The authors in the chapter all desire a sense of belonging. All authors describe experiences of entering the higher education environment and trying to actively search for information, relationships and advice to support their belonging. While search, the authors also describe navigating institutional politics and group dynamics.

The authors also share multiple identities. There are layers of PhD student, active researcher, teacher, leader, academic or professional staff. As Fitzgerald (2014) and Kaner (1993) reiterate, academics constantly scrutinize to see if they fit within a group and organisation. There is a “risk of being isolated”(Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 85) if you are not acting how others expect you to act.

“Establishing or belonging to a supportive and trustworthy network of women leaders can lesson feelings of loneliness and isolation” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p.106). These networks offer an opportunity for social exchange where “reciprocal and trust can be built around informal relationships and professional obligations” (p.106). There is a safe place and a space created and grown that allows for the sharing of experiences, creating ideas, and reflecting about actions. In the creation of this book, a community formed through these practices. As Fitzgerald reinforces, women “participate in ongoing informal networks that [rely] on a range of self-directed and self-selected activities such as meeting colleagues for a coffee, seeking out colleagues in similar roles” (p.106).

All the authors come from different positions with academia – they are in, out, moving in, moving out or a combination of being in and out. Some of the authors share insights where they are positioned within the ‘third space’ of academia
that is employed in academic development roles in central teaching and learning units in universities. The conceptualising of this space offers a blurring of perceptions and identities as academics and professional staff and thus this continually contested and problematic space (Land, 2008; Handal, 2008) forces those who work in this space to continually reflect upon identity. These lived experiences provided different lived experiences for us to consider when paralleled to most of the authors who are teacher educators or work in the field of education within industry. Becoming a teacher educator is often filled with tension. As teachers enter graduate school, they often make the transition to the role of teacher educator with little formal support from the university institution for continuing development (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005). Thus, the socialisation from a school teacher to teacher educator is filled with tension, as teachers attempt to re-establish their identity within their new roles with new expectations. In this book, many are dealing with the change in identity. Dall’Alba (2009, p. 34) believed that, “the transformation of the self is integral to achieving such practice”. The transformation requires more than just simple programming to teach particular things in particular ways. Rather, there must be a sense of openness that ‘being’ is not predetermined by a tertiary institution or government and that the purpose of education is necessarily one of forming an identity (Novinger & O’Brien, 2003).

The women in this study share their narratives in an open dialogue. Their journey into and out of academia is constructed from “a metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The space enables the authors to capture and communicate the emotional nature of lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The self-studies explore the changes in social and contextual approaches that are attached to working and studying in higher education. The book provides a narrative of the “ups” and “downs” that female academics have individually and collectively encountered.

Researching one’s practice provides opportunities to uncover understanding about the complex relations between learning and teaching, and how such knowledge can be enacted (Loughran, 2007). It also allows the exploration of leadership. This narrating and engagement in the practice of story telling offers “social interaction that other modes of communication do not” (Riessman, 2008, p.8). Individuals are able to construct their identities through storytelling and thus “encourage others to act” (Riessman, 2008, p.8). Through self-study researchers recognise that, “there is an important relationship between personal growth and understanding and public discourse about that understanding” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). This is how the authors of this book have approached sharing their stories.

In our role as academics we see ourselves as ongoing learners. We learn, teach and use reflective and metacognitive processes (Wilson & Clarke, 2004). This space is where we as authors position the importance of self-study. Self-study through reflective practice is the thoughtful, systematic, critical, exploration of the complexity of one’s own learning and teaching practice (Samaras & Freese, 2006).
We live, tell, retell, and relive our life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as we negotiate our selves within and across various contexts. This book reports on the reflective self-study of thirteen early career researchers who engage in reflection on their career trajectory ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the academic profession. Authors include:

- Individuals wanting to enter into academia after completion of doctoral studies.
- Individuals already working in academia and undertaking their doctoral work.
- Individuals seeking balance within the early stages of being in the academy.
- Individuals who have chosen to change institutions and locations (national and international).
- Individuals who have chosen to leave altogether.

All use Schwab’s flights from the field. The flights from the field act as an interpretive tool revealing similarities, differences and tensions through the perceived experience of academic life in Australia.

Schwab, through, his deep commitment to his personal pedagogy and his unwavering support of “teachers…looking at their own practices and the consequences of them” (Schwab, 1959/1978, p.168) resonates with the authors of this book. The thirteen early career researchers align themselves to this way of thinking as both come from teaching fields within education and are now working as academics in teacher education in universities located in Australia. As a self-study Schwab (1969) informs the method used in this inquiry with a focus on understanding all educational situations in terms of four interacting commonplaces; subject matter, learner, milieu and teacher (Schwab, 1970).

In this self-study, the experience of being early career researchers unites the authors. All have been individually reflective on their roles and experiences and have engaged in conversations with and in some cases between each other and as a collective about what they have learnt. Connecting the authors is also a key goal of becoming well-rounded academics, learning from others and focusing on building research profiles within the higher education context. All are focused on being well-rounded individuals that is explicitly looking at how we take care of ourselves personally and professionally while we maneuver being early career researchers.

This shift prompted the authors to ponder the practical and to connect with our feelings of excitement and trepidation in this climate where much is invested in the success of being an active researcher. The authors were interested to explore their career trajectory so far as a female within the academy that was confronted with many problems. Schwab believed that such problems were slippery to grasp because they ‘intrinsically involve states of character and the possibly of character change’ (p. 3). Flights are “not all or equally reprehensible” (1969, p.4). Rather, they can be positive and/or negative and can take many paths. Schwab (1970) identified six flights from the field. These included:

1. General flight from the field (‘A translocation of its problems and the solving of them from the nominal practitioners of the field to other men’ (p. 17)).
2. Flight upward (‘from theory to metatheory and from metatheory to meta-
metatheory’ (p. 17)).
3. Flight downward (‘an attempt by practitioners to return to the subject matter in a
state of innocence, shorn not only of principles but of all principles, in an effort to
take a new, pristine, and unmediated look at the subject matter’ (p. 17)).
4. Flight to the sidelines (‘to the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic
of the contributions of others’ (p. 17)).
5. Flight with marked perseveration (‘a repetition of old and familiar knowledge in
new languages which add little or nothing to the old meanings embodied’ (p. 17)).
6. Flight (debate that is ‘eristic and contentious...[with] warfare of words among
contending exponents of [for example], different theories of personality’ (p. 18)).

Each author collected data over the space of 12 months by writing reflective notes
and thoughts about their place in academia and their positioning as early career
researchers. A framework guided the narratives shared:

1. General flight – experiences that contribute to you want to enter/entering
academia.
2. Flight upwards – opportunities that are exciting in your career trajectory/what is
inspiring.
3. Flight downward – the challenges/barriers/questions you ask about experiences,
lack of opportunities or how you have been treated/or seen others been treated.
4. Flight to sideline – moment(s) when you have stepped to the side to observe,
reflect and reconsider how to look after yourself or reconsider where you are
heading and what you would like to achieve.
5. Flight of perseveration – looking after you and your needs as a women in
academia/trying to enter academia.
6. Final flight – where to next, what do you want to achieve, what strategies
help you in focusing on yourself and your career?

WAYS FORWARD

Part of the process for the way forward has been to create a community of practice
for early career females. This is the creation of this book that has allowed women to
come together and share stories. The term “CoP” is defined as a purposeful social
structure where teachers regularly come together to work for the collective benefit
of students (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Using a collaborative approach this project has become more common-place
as both a top-down and bottom-up initiative to allow greater understanding of
experience. As a recognized key strategy for improving practice (Fullan, 1993), CoP
and the resultant collaborative practices have been implemented as a part of school
improvement initiatives. These initiatives have been seen as a means of improving
outcomes through shared learning and individual and collective development of the
N. LEMON & S. GARVIS

community members (Fullan, 1993). Making these stories known establishes a sense of collaboration and community. This action serves to perpetuate and further develop the established pedagogy and look to improve practice. A community practice seeks to locate the learning in the process of co-participation (building social capital) and not just within individuals (Hanks, 1991). It allows females to come together to share experience and discuss ways forward.

REFERENCES


BEING IN THE ACADEMY
GEORGINA BARTON

2. JUST KEEP FOLLOWING THE HEARTLINES ON YOUR HAND

PRELUDE

This chapter shares a personal journey; one that has hit lots of bumpy roads along the way. But in the words of singer-songwriter Florence Welch I have managed to “keep following the heartlines on my hand”. It took ten years since gaining my Ph.D. to get a continuing role in academia – and I love it! There have however, been many challenges in getting there, but now that I am there I am beginning to realise that there are many more challenges to come. This chapter draws on the theoretical frameworks of professional socialisation and reflection in attempting to highlight both the process and the outcomes achieved in academia. Becoming socialised into an academic profession is not easy but, as a reflective professional who can focus on positivity and confidence in oneself, it can be very fulfilling.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores my own experience as a woman pursuing an academic career since I received my doctorate in the areas of education and musicology in 2004. It has been ten years since I finished my Ph.D. yet I have only been in my first continuing role, as an academic, for 12 months. There have been a number of reasons why including: family; my own reservations about my capability and whether I was ready or not; and also, I believe, due to perceptions of other academics including gender stereotypes. The chapter discusses the many challenges I faced as a researcher, teacher, woman, mother and musician. During this time, in many ways, I followed my heartline rather than my headline. In some respect this is a ‘feminine’ way of doing things (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004); it was for me at least. I even recall saying to my daughter while I was struggling as to whether or not I should apply for a full-time role “Should I follow my head or my heart?” and she replied “Your heart!” Needless to say I didn’t get that job.

WHO AM I?

Before I entered the academic profession I was a teacher for 20 years, having experience in both primary and secondary schools. I have also been working in universities for this length of time in a part-time capacity. Since completing my
Ph.D. in 2004 I have applied for ten academic roles with the 11th being successful; and I have to say I really love my job. Upon reflection, I am able to accept that during the past 10 years I have learnt a great deal about myself. I have also learnt a lot about research, data collection and analysis and management due to working on other people’s research projects; something I do not think I would have gained if I did go straight into a job.

Using the theoretical frameworks of professional socialisation and reflection this chapter will highlight how these perspectives impact on the ways in which I have had to negotiate particular identities, both developed by myself but also imposed upon me; and also how I have had to reflect on the journey including the ‘bumpy roads’ in order to come to terms with who I am as a researcher and academic. I will thread through the notions of multiple identities and being socialised into the profession of academia my personal narrative. An autoethnographic, narrative journey can talk about events in our life and give purpose to these. According to Park-Fuller (2003):

In autobiographical narrative performances, the performer often speaks about acts of social transgression. In doing so, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act—a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced—an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics (p. 26).

This chapter is an opportunity for me to tell my story from my perspective, as with the other authors of this book. Park-Fuller (2003) however, does alert us to the idea that stories are never static. We may present them from one perspective one day but different the next. This is because our experience is ever-changing and always impacting on the ways in which we perceive things, the ways in which we learn and adapt. This chapter will interweave reflective practice throughout and then share some key personal flights that have led me to where I am now.

BECOMING AND BEING A REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL

Step 1: Negotiating Multiple Identities

For quite some time I have had to negotiate with a number of identities including: sessional tutor, research assistant, project manager, lecturer, teacher, mother, wife, musician or artist. When I began my Ph.D. my daughter was very young and during my study I had my son. Being a mother and wife was very important to me so I made a lot of sacrifices to be good at these roles. At times, focusing on my family would put me behind in my study and therefore career but I did not mind, as being a mother, and a good one at that, was more important to me. Financially, I had to work even while I was studying.

This has at times been difficult to manage as I had taken on all of these roles at once; mainly trying to earn an income. In the work related positions it was difficult to ‘find and establish’ a consistent or ‘strong’ identity (Bassett, 1998). As
a sessional tutor I was on the one hand respected for my professional skills and knowledge, yet on the other not completely socialised or accepted as a professional staff member. Bassett's (1998) work investigated, for example, how both part-time and sessional staff in higher education often feel “marginalized, exploited and expendable” (p. 1). Further, Bryson and Blackwell (2006) reported that when higher education institutions tried to include part-time and casual staff through the use of various differentiation strategies they often failed to acknowledge career aspirations of such employees. Feeling marginalised, due to the fact that I was not a permanent staff member, was a recurring experience for me since working in universities since 1994.

Another identity I have maintained is that of an ‘artist-teacher’. Carrillo and Baguley (2011) note that many teachers of the arts have an identity that encompasses “a personal dimension related to what [they] perceive as being important for developing skills and expertise in [their] discipline areas, in addition to a contextual component which is continually affected by the perception of ‘teacher’ in society” (p. 63). They also acknowledge that this is impacted on by the social, cultural and institutional environments in which the artist-teacher works. For me, music or art is at the core of everything I do. I began learning the violin when I was 7 years old and always knew that I wanted to be a music teacher. When I studied at university I majored in music and English. In this way the discipline of the arts (with creative practice as its central tenet) helped form my identity as a creative practitioner. I also enjoyed studying English and literature. In this sense the notion of disciplinarity had a large impact on my own identity. I identified as both an ‘artist’ and a ‘teacher’.

Not only has the identity of artist-teacher impacted on my professional learning but also the ways in which others perceived me (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Once I had completed my Ph.D. it was difficult for those in the same faculty to view me as an equal – as I had always been a ‘student’ to them. I believe this also impacted on my lack of success in gaining an academic role. Reynolds and Pope (1991) refer to this as ‘multiple oppressions’.

Challenging the roles to which I was allocated by others proved to be difficult. In the area of social constructivism however, Weber (1998) states that one should be able to challenge the dominant sub-ordinate binaries; that is, those that are implied or imposed upon us such as those related to gender, race, class and sexuality not to mention role and curriculum areas (Shih, Pittinshy & Ambady, 1999). Academic jobs in the arts are extremely limited (Barton, Baguley & MacDonald, 2013) yet one such opportunity did arise soon after I completed my doctorate. I will elaborate on this opportunity and my lack of success in gaining the position in my flight downward later in this chapter.

Despite having to juggle and, I believe, struggle with these multiple identities I have, as a result, been able to reflect on them. I have been able to utilise the learnings from them to further develop my own capacities as I continue to navigate and negotiate with a professional academic workplace and context. This is further explored in step 2 – socialising into the profession.
Step 2: Socialising into the Profession

Jarvis (1983) defines socialisation as “the process by which the objective world of reality is internalised and becomes subjectively meaningful” (p. 88). This process is important to consider when socialising into a particular profession. Socialisation can be extremely complex with a number of factors influencing the ways in which people start to submerge themselves into employment. All of the roles that I have held over the past 10 years have contributed to the ways in which I now interpret, and operate in, my current workplace. The knowledge and skills that I have learnt throughout this time have been applied to my own research and teaching. I continue to “internalise values and norms” (Du Toit as cited in Howkins & Ewens, 1999) as expressed through the social and cultural attributes of and in my work environment.

Billet (2004) states that learning is seen as a consequence of participation in social practices and highlights the notion that there are procedural goals that impact on workplace practices. Further, it is the individual’s own agency and intentionalities that impact the most on the socialisation process. Learning is constant and in this regard while I have finally achieved my intended goal – to be employed in academia – I now face different challenges. It is important to consider the personal interests, agency and reflexivity of the newly socialised individual as this could potentially transform the workplace. Billett’s (2004) work shows how an individual, with strong capacities, can direct the ways in which they socialise into the workforce or professional practice rather than having the workplace impose upon them. In this sense my challenges in negotiating multiple identities has actually put me in good stead to face continued challenges in my new role. In this way the development of a personal epistemology is enabled.

Step 3: Developing a Personal Epistemology

The notion of personal epistemologies (Billet, 2009) extends the idea that as an emerging academic or professional it is important to be aware of one’s identity or identities, particularly in relation to how that profession shapes and moulds you. According to Billet (2009):

Personal epistemologies are defined as individuals’ ways of knowing and acting arising from their capacities, earlier experiences, and ongoing negotiations with the social and brute world, that together shape how they engage with and learn through work activities and interactions (p. 211).

Throughout my learning journey I have managed to develop a distinct personal epistemology; one that embraces my artist-teacher role as well as the other aspects in my life. The arts are at the core of everything I do yet I have been unable to secure a permanent role in this area; but rather in my other area of expertise – English and
literacy education. While I commit a great deal of time and effort to make this area of my teaching the best possible experience for my students I do so by regularly applying my arts knowledge and expertise. In some ways I have made English teaching fit with me or my own personal epistemology.

This was only possible because of the experiences I had in various employed positions and roles. Erdogan and Bauer (2005) examined further the relationship between proactive personality and intrinsic career success. They found that employees that had a ‘high fit’ with their workplace resulted in an improved outcome of intrinsic career success. In this sense I have been both an enterprising and agentic individual. I have, according to Campbell (2000), been a proactive employee.

Billet’s (2010) work explains four accounts of self: autonomous self, subjugated self, enterprising self and agentic self. An autonomous self is where an individual exercises autonomy and freedom in realising their desired goals; a subjugated self is where an individual is a mere placeholder within social systems; an enterprising self is a reflexive individual who can agentically maintain their identity within social systems; and agentic individuals selectively engage and negotiate with social suggestions to secure, develop and maintain their identity. Billet (2010, p. 11) believes these have distinct purposes and processes in actively resisting and reconstructing both self and society.

This aligns with Archer’s (2010) concept of reflexivity where the key to understanding ourselves is to explore the relationship between individuals and the social and cultural structures in which they operate. Archer’s (2010) work describes four types of reflexive personalities. These include: The autonomous, the communicative, the fractured and the meta-reflexive. Moffatt (2013) has adapted these by referring to them as: the director, the talker, the indecisive and the analyser. An autonomous reflexive can easily make up their mind and take direct action. The talker or communicative reflexive has to discuss their ideas and thoughts with others in order to make sense of the world around them. A fractured or indecisive reflexive is unable to take action as they need to think over issues; interrupting any positive outcome. The meta-reflexive or analyser can critically analyse and evaluate a situation in order to take action from this experience and to effect change.

**Following My Heartline: My Flights**

I, in my current role, believe that I carry out each of these selves and reflexive roles at different points in time. These parallel with different *flights* that occur in life – particularly both upward and downward. A more productive professional performance however, is one that is both agentic and meta-reflexive where a reconstructive process is cumulative and acts as a reflective spiral where an individual is able to step out of the professional context, reflect and use their personal agency to reconstruct practice based on their prior experiences.
GENERAL FLIGHT

When I was studying to become an English and Music secondary teacher I did not know much about post-graduate study. One topic that we were learning however, drew me in to want to know more. It was the study of ethnomusicology. After I completed my Diploma of Teaching I taught for two years in the high school and then began another degree. It was during this study that I was able to specialise in ethnomusicology. When I completed this degree I decided to begin my honours. I was able to upgrade this to a Ph.D. within a year.

During my Ph.D. studies I also had two children which made it quite a difficult journey. It certainly was a big achievement even though I didn’t feel this when I finished. I had no idea what the point was of completing such a hard and stressful task. In many ways I regretted putting so much of my life and effort into something that returned so little once it was all over and done with. I think this was largely due to the fact that I was one of the first people to complete a doctorate in my area in this university. They hadn’t quite worked out what to do with doctoral students and we were offered very little assistance during the whole process. Things have certainly changed, I think, for HDR students. Since completing my Ph.D. I regularly held research assistant roles, sessional tutoring and project management jobs. It was during this time that I feel I learnt the most about the research process.

FLIGHT UPWARDS

At the time of completing my Ph.D. there were not many academic jobs in the area of music or music education so I applied for a research assistant job in the area of literacies and disciplinarity; of which one of the disciplines with music. This time was very exciting for me because I was not only accepted for this role but also offered a Post-Doctoral fellowship. During my fellowship I was able to apply a great deal of knowledge from my undergraduate degree which also focused on the English language and literature. It also made me realise that the focus of my Ph.D. was in fact multimodality – something I was unaware of at the time of writing it.

Working with expert and reputable scholars throughout my career has definitely inspired me. I have found that professorial scholars are extremely supportive and willing to share their expertise and ideas. This part of my journey has impacted greatly on my desire to pursue a job in academia.

FLIGHT DOWNWARD

The main challenge for me was actually trying to get a continuing role in a university. For many of us who work in universities there are some challenges to be faced in order to get an academic job. For many of the jobs that I applied for I did become aware that there were others already identified for these roles. This can be very challenging and disappointing.
Another challenge I believe is common in institutions where you position yourself, is that if people know you as a student or a research assistant it is very difficult to then place you in an equal role. I think this has impacted on many people’s career trajectories in the university context. As this book is about early career women I think it’s important to highlight the fact that opportunities for women are less (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). This became evident to me when I applied for my first job soon after completing my Ph.D. I was told that one of the reasons why I was not successful was because I was very softly spoken. This was certainly not one of the selection criteria. It was apparent that a male applicant was identified for this position. Now that I have a continuing role I know that I have always had the capacity to fulfil this kind of role successfully. I feel more confident in the work that I do and believe that this forms a major part of how others perceive you.

FLIGHT TO SIDELINE

Flights to the sideline from me have potentially been each time I have gone for a job interview. For those that I was not successful I always reflected afterwards and wondered why I did not get the job or how I could have answered a particular question more effectively. For my most recent and successful interview I completed a ‘learning style profiler’ and a questionnaire that revealed what type of reflexive person I was. This enabled me to learn more about my strengths and weaknesses and therefore talk about these to the panel.

According to Margaret Archer (2010) I am an autonomous reflexive whereby I complete my internal deliberations alone and act upon them. I therefore need to communicate more with others on occasion about other ways (which I may not have already considered) to improve my professional practice. The learning style profiler identified me as a goal oriented achiever. This is an effective personality trait but sometimes I need to ‘stop, look and listen’. Quiet reflection is important for professional development and growth as well as deeper thinking. This is particularly important in academia as collaborative work is valued and not all members of a team may work this way.

FLIGHT OF PERSEVERATION

For me, creative practice is where I can find time to relax whether it is sitting at the piano or singing or dancing. Unfortunately, due to injury I am unable to play my main instrument, the violin; otherwise I would continue performing in orchestras. Other sources of personal perseveration include yoga and meditation and finding the time with other colleagues to just sit and relax and chat about how things are going. Without these flights of perseveration I tend to become less productive and find it difficult to focus on the task at hand.

As I write this chapter I am very much aware of the fact that I do not have an adequate number of flights of perseveration, at this point in time. Academic work
can be all-consuming and exciting at the same time. I have found myself working long hours since I began in this role. This is partly due to having to develop new courses as well as settle into the role; probably making a good impression. It is important to find a balance between work and moments of perseveration.

FINAL FLIGHT AND WHERE TO NEXT?

I love my current position and am very happy that I have finally achieved a continuing role. I am excited about what this role will bring. I acknowledge that the challenges and re-negotiations with the workplace, and individuals within it, will continue even thought I have secured a continuing position. I will at different points in time face other and new challenges. I am now able to be an agentic and reflexive employee as a result of my work-life experiences. Initially I was not all that interested in promotion and moving up the ladder. However, I am now becoming more aware that I am good at this job.

I do have a number of immediate goals including: improving the number of research grants I hold; the number of publications I have; and improving my professional presence in the areas in which I research. These aspects of the job do excite me as my personality type enjoys achieving goals. The next step, for me, is to make sure that I do not take on too much but rather, focus in on key projects in order to do these well as well as make a clear research path for myself.

CONCLUSION

My journey into academia has been one full of many challenges: having to negotiate multiple identities; having to navigate many different workplaces and roles; and having to accept a number of social and cultural practices despite not agreeing with them personally. All of these experiences have enabled me to develop my own personal epistemology as well as increase my capacity to be an agentic and reflexive individual; ensuring professional growth. I have in a sense kept “following the heartlines on my hand” despite a number of obstacles. It is important, however to be strong with your career aspirations and set reasonable goals to achieve them. Becoming socialised into an academic profession is not easy but, as a reflective professional who can focus on positivity and confidence in oneself, it can be very fulfilling.

REFERENCES


JUST KEEP FOLLOWING THE HEARTLINES ON YOUR HAND


SUSANNE GARVIS

3. ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH TO BE IN ACADEMIA?
YOU DON’T HAVE GREY HAIR

Constructions of Women in Academia

PRELUDE

Becoming a teacher educator is often filled with tension. In my case the tension is based on the identity of being a younger female in the academy. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1999), for a teacher, knowledge is entwined with identity. For a teacher educator, identity is interwoven with the lives and knowledge of teachers, children and youth (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009). In my role as a female academic, my identity of teacher educator is also constructed around my age.

In my previous career as a teacher, my age never entered conversations. Within the university, my age as a younger female academic appears a continual discussion point. Similar experiences have also been shared by academics in the United Kingdom (Archer, 2008).

In this chapter I share my experiences of entering the academy as a younger female. I share my flights of reflection based on a chronological development of a sense of resilience. In my final flights I share my coping strategies of collaboration and developing a strong sense of agency. I also offer advice to a younger version of myself and call upon women to share their stories to provide new meanings of understanding and support.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give voice to my story on female age discrimination that is yet to be heard by the greater academic community. Only a handful of studies have focused on younger female academics (Archer, 2006; Davis & Petterson, 2005). My stories of experience are often secret and kept behind closed doors. This chapter however brings these stories to the forefront, providing a platform for stories to be shared. The strengths of my flights are the deeper understanding shared about the complexity of being a female in the academy. The stories I share are designed to illuminate personal thoughts and actions, and, at the same time show how I make sense of my relationships with others and their stance in the world (Bruner, 1986).

Context, process and relationship feature heavily in this self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998, p. 236) suggest self study “is the
study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self”’. The six flights allow me to explore the autobiographical, historical and cultural landscapes that influence my identity. I draw on a conceptualization of identity as discursively produced and ‘becoming’ – yet also embodied and culturally entangled (Hesse, 2000) and produced within multi-layered structural inequalities (Archer & Francis, 2006).

Gladwell (2000) describes the tipping point as the moment of critical mass, the threshold, or the boiling point. While this chapter doesn’t have the potential to create a tipping point, it shows glimpses of what could be, and encourages the continued sharing of stories that will challenge the status quo. Through such sharing, a cascade of sustained change can create a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000). Challenging the status quo also allows the grande narrative of females in the academy to be sufficiently displaced, with room created for alternative stories that conform to the status quo. These alternative stories provide an awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of women in academia, making a significant moral and ethical consideration to the development of women’s careers.

WHO AM I?

In this study I examine my career from a social constructionist perspective that emphasises the social processes by which people develop their social reality and knowledge about that reality in an ongoing way in interaction with others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995; Cohen, Duberley & Mallon, 2004) My identity shapes all elements of my academic career. Aged in my 30s, I am still within my early career phase within the academy. In Australia, an early career academic is still within their first five years of academia since being awarded a Ph.D. (Hemmings, 2012; Hemmings. In other parts of the world, such as North America, the early career phase can span more than 10 years (Foote, 2010). Given the difference in definitions around the world, this can appear problematic when travelling to other institutions.

When I originally graduated from my Bachelor qualification, I vowed never to study again. After a number of years teaching I began to want more for my own understanding and decided to study a Master degree full time while working full time. I enjoyed the challenge. After a Master degree I decided to apply for a Ph.D. to continue my research pathway. My partner had previously completed a Ph.D. so I was aware of all the possible twists and turns during study.

During my Ph.D. studies I was offered a full-time tenured lecturing position. During this time I managed to fulfill the roles of working full time as an academic and studying full time to complete my Ph.D.. My working ethic was in overdrive as I completed both tasks. Various academic studies have noted the long working hours of academics, with work spilling into evenings and weekends (Archer, 2008). In my case I would work most weekends. Reay (2000) notes that early career researchers often have to work at double-pace to prove their capability.
After I completed my Ph.D., my working habits continued with weekends. I began to feel a level of age discrimination. I decided to complete more study with another Master degree in a university space where I should strive and better myself (Archer, 2006). Coming from a working background I felt that it was difficult to pass into a ‘classed space’ such as the academy (Hey, 2003). My younger age appeared problematic.

My initial concern about age can be represented in Australian research. In Australian universities, over 46.1% of academic staff are aged 50 years and over (Hugo, 2008, p. 21). In teacher education, the field in which I work, 62.8% of academics are aged over 50 years (Hugo, 2008, p. 21). According to a study by the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), Hugo (2008, p. 15) reports:

It is clear that Generation X is substantially under-represented in the academic workforce compared with other professional areas and the workforce as a whole. There are also some substantial gender differences, among the older lecturing staff, [as] there are four men for every woman aged over 55.

Attrition rates are also high. Female academics in their late 20s and 30s rival that of academics at retiring age (Southwell, 2012; Varmvakinou, 2008). Given that large numbers of older academics are retiring and the rising of student enrolments (Hugo, 2005), it would seem significant to support new academics to build sustainability within the sector (Hemmings, 2012).

**GENDER AND IDENTITY**

Age appears a highly relevant characteristic in workforce recruitment, performance and performance evaluation (Perry & Parlamis, 2006). Research suggests that men and women experience age, ageing and ageism in different ways in organisations and management (Itzin & Phillipson, 1995; Ilmarinen, 2005). Some studies have highlighted that many women feel they are the wrong age for their career (Duncan & Loretto, 2004; Jyrkinen, 2013), with early mid-age women finding age discrimination a particular issue. Older women also perceive age discrimination. In a study by Jyrkinen (2013), older women’s knowledge was not valued in the same way as that of their male counterparts. Jyrkinen (2013) concluded that a patriarchal value system tended to exclude ‘old people’ when they are women.

Gender discrimination also emerges for women in the academy. Many earlier studies show how gendering processes in academia marginalise women and reduce their opportunities (Barry, Chandler, and Clark 2001; Goode and Bagilhole 1998; Margolis and Romero 1998; Prichard 1996; Thomas and Davies 2002; Valian 1998). While gender discrimination is now acknowledged in many institutions as an issue, the reproduction of certain traditions continues to create barriers for women and leadership opportunities.

Only a handful of studies have combined both gender and age when exploring discrimination against women in the workforce, termed by Carpenter (1996) as ‘gendered ageism’ or ‘sexageism’. Gendered ageism is described as a process that
replicates and reproduces the existing gender order (Connell, 1987). Some studies have added appearance to age and gender. Under an intersectionality approach, Granleese and Sayer (2005) describes this as age, gender and ‘lookism’. For example, in a United Kingdom study, women in higher education commented discrimination about their appearance alongside age and gender. Similarly in Finland (Jyrkinen, 2013) women’s self-presentation of bodies and looks were subject to gendered ageism form an early career stage. Comments would be made about clothing and physical appearance. One form of discrimination identified by Jyrkinen (2013) was the treatment of women as ‘girls’ by male colleagues and supervisors. In work contexts, ‘girling’ is a derogatory word that is attached to other genderageist actions (Martin, 2006). Jyrkinen (2013, p. 5) describes the approach as:

The ‘girling phenomenon’ is that of calling adult women ‘girls’ and treating them as such in a disparaging way. It can sometimes be a benignly-used reference made by older men about women that unintentionally infantilises women (in leisure time, such as ‘How are you girls doing tonight?’).

Intersectionality is an approach used to reconceptualise identities, deconstruct social categories and divisions, and explore multiple marginalisations (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality addresses the simultaneous existence and occurrence of multiple sociocultural categories, such as gender, race/ethnicity, age and class, and how they mutually construct, ‘inter-act’ and transform each other (Lykke, 2005). In this case it allows the exploration of my personal experiences in the academy as I move through multiple sociocultural categories. I align with the beliefs of Richardson and Loubier (2008, p. 143), that ‘people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structured power.

My identity is based within the notion of being a teacher educator. For a teacher educator, identity is interwoven with the lives and knowledge of teachers, children and youth (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009). From this conceptualisation, we can consider teachers’ personal practical knowledge; that is, the experiential, moral, emotional, embodied knowledge teachers hold and express in their classroom practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Understanding teachers’ knowledge allows us to develop a narrative understanding about the context in which teachers live and work. Those living as teacher educators live on a continual shifting social landscape. The shifting landscapes continually shape teacher knowledge and teachers’ identities as they live out their stories. Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009, p. 142) explain the complexity of teachers shifting landscapes, noting, “we simultaneously consider our shifting landscapes as teacher educators and the kinds of spaces we might collaboratively shape with teachers as they attempt to sustain their stories to live by as they work in schools”. From this realisation, Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009) suggest that such storied spaces also hold the potential for sustaining the identity of teacher educators. As a teacher educator I am aware of the larger society plot lines that ripple through schools and universities, influencing the contexts and people (Geertz, 1995).
ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH TO BE IN ACADEMIA? YOU DON’T HAVE GREY HAIR

MY FLIGHTS

In sharing my own narrative, I engage in six flights of reflection that explore my own perceptions and experiences. My journey into teacher education is constructed from “a metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) and is an engagement with my “story as data” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 7). It enables me (the author) to capture and communicate the emotional nature of my lived experience as well as capturing the dynamic nature of these lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The flights I undertake have not generated an academic, distant, third-person, objective voice (Elijah, 2004; Tynan & Garbett, 2007). Similar to Tynan & Garbett (2007) I have found that reviewers of this approach often ask for more theory and less of personal stories. Striking a balance is difficult but it is hoped that my story of the lived reality in the academy may provide benefit to others.

In each of the flights you will see enablers and barriers to my academic confidence. Towards the final flight I also change my overall understanding of myself as my confidence grows and I become more resilient.

GENERAL FLIGHT

The first flight describes my initial entry into the academy. It highlights the construction of female academics by others, and introduces the concept of a ‘golden age’ in academia. My isolation becomes evident to the reader.

When I first entered into the academy I realised I was the youngest person in the Faculty of Education. It was initially strange sitting in meetings without anyone of a similar age. I was initially scared to speak. While others spoke about their past in the academy as a ‘golden age’, I could not pass comment. In a study by Archer (2008), similar findings were also made by younger academics reflecting on their older colleagues. Archer (2008) suggests identity construction for experienced academics is influenced by generational dimensions. In her study, she noted that many of the younger academics questioned the construct of a ‘golden age’ and talked about human nature to romanticize the past. This became evident to me during many conversations.

During my first week, I would eat my lunch in the staff room. Every day I was told that students were not allowed to eat their lunch in the staff lounge. It appeared that while I had the mental capability to work in the academy, my physical appearance was seen as ‘too young’. The construction of a female academic by these commenters appeared someone who was older.

It was difficult to find common ground for every day discussion in the academy. While older staff talked about retirement, my working life was beginning. I was often told ‘I had a lot to learn’, and that the institution ‘may not treat you as well as in the golden age’. I began to realise the extent of my isolation. Sometimes I would go to work and talk to no one for the entire day. While I wanted to complain to my...
friends I couldn’t. Many of my friends had studied Ph.D.s but were not offered the same changes for entry into the academy.

FLIGHT UPWARDS

My second flight provides an experience of false hope, in which I believe that my age does not contribute to my embodied identity. By being praised for success, I began to question if my age construction was my own creation of insecurity.

Two months after my tenured appointment I secured a large amount of consultancy for the university and an external research grant. The flow on from securing substantial amounts of money during my first two months of a continuous appointment was huge. All of a sudden I was encouraged to engage with the university media and promote my success. I was invited to functions that were usually exclusive for successful researchers. I was now eligible to join research institutes within the university. I was invited to lunch with the university leaders. I was treated a little differently. For a short space of time, I felt like my age did not matter. I had a step on the ladder as an early career academic (Hemmings, 2012). My confidence improved and I began to think about my research career.

During this time I began to question if “lookism” (Granleese & Sayer, 2005) existed. I was no longer marginalized by my physical appearance but rather my academic capability. Or that is what I thought…

My answer came quickly. On a Thursday afternoon I was involved in an intense research meeting with older academics to develop a new research grant application. On Friday morning I wore jeans to work and worked in the café. An older academic from the previous day walked around my table. “Good luck with your assignment—there are only two weeks until the end of semester”, he said. He didn’t recognize me. I was constructed as a ‘student’. Again the concept of ‘lookism’ (Granleese & Sayer, 2005) dominated my appearance to others.

FLIGHT DOWNWARD

My flight downward has created tears, confusion and anxiety. It provides examples of how my biological age and appearance dominates other people’s constructions of who I am. Again representations of being a student overshadow my actual role as an academic. My biological appearance in an intersectionality approach dominates through the concept of ‘lookism’ (Granleese & Sayer, 2005). My confidence decreased after each experience.

While I was lucky to have a continuous appointment, my age often appeared problematic to others. Before I spoke people would often judge me as inexperienced. For example, at a conference I had just given an interesting presentation on my current funded research project. At the end of my presentation I was happy to have an audience member ask a question. I nodded for them to ask their question, happy
that someone might be interested in my research. They took a deep breath and spoke
“It is good research but are you old enough to do this?” I was confused. “What do
you mean?” I asked. “Well you don’t have grey hair. This is research for those with
grey hair”, they stated. I gave a fake laugh, trying to defuse the situation and bring
the presentation to a close. I have also been asked about what wrinkle cream I use
and how I stay looking ‘so young’.

I am often mistaken for a student. I remember turning up to mark the university
final for the two minute thesis competition. When I tried to enter the judges area I
was told students were not allowed, only the judges. I had to show my staff card to
show I was in fact an academic. I made my way to the judging area and sat down. I
could see others around me, including the audience confused.

The library staff would also perceive me as a student. When I would request a
book from another country, I was informed staff were only allowed to borrow. I
would again need to show my staff card as proof of my employment as an academic.
Similar to Jyrkinen’s (2013) study, my self-presentation of body and looks were
subject to a form of ageism.

My low confidence was created by personal perceptions. Research self-efficacy
(or confidence) plays an important part in an academic’s career (Blackburn &
Lawrence, 1995). Akerlind (2007) notes that successful academics not only build
up a range of research skills, they have the confidence to apply these skills in an
appropriate and meaningful fashion. While I had adequate research skills, I was still
learning the confidence of how to apply and communicate others not confidence, I
needed extra support for my confidence.

FLIGHT TO SIDELINE

My next flight explores my strategies to improve my self-presentation and the
concept of ‘lookism’. Initially I thought I could make myself look older by wearing
business clothes and engage in ‘power dressing’. I soon realised that this was not
who I was and in a suit I still looked young.

I began to reflect on my own situation and questioned what it meant to be a
younger female in the academy. There was nothing wrong with me- I was achieving
excellence in research and teaching. I was on editorial boards and being invited for
keynotes. I was also asked to engage in visiting scholar positions in other countries. I
realised I did not need to change a thing. The situation was external to me. I couldn’t
change the perceptions of others but I could create coping strategies to deal with
comments. I would always have to deal with constructs of age, gender and ‘lookism’
(Granleese & Sayer, 2005).

A female professor also gave some exceptional advice- “Once I was young like
you at conferences and thought who were all of these old women in the room. Now
I am one of the old women in the room!” We shared a laugh and a smile. Her
journey was similar to mine. This event changed my mindset and spurred me on
to greater things. Hemmings (2010) found similar single events when interviewing early career academics. Single events provided a vote of confidence and appeared to positively influence the construction of researcher identities.

Mentoring is viewed as a means for developing confidence in the academy. Stenova (2009) writes how one-to-one mentoring is an effective approach for those employed in the social sciences and humanities. My above experience was an informal mentoring experience, but it managed to support my confidence. Poole and Bornholt (1998) advocate that procedural know-how is needed in early stages of an academic’s career and that various experts need to be sourced to provide information and model practice. From my meeting with the female professor, I was supported from both.

FLIGHT OF PERSEVERATION

My fifth flight explores coping strategies I have initiated to strengthen my resilience. This includes creating informal supportive networks. This technique is reported in the literature by younger female academics (Archer, 2008) as a way of surviving the academy.

My informal support network was created in 2010. After attending a conference, I had finally found another early career academic who was prepared to collaborate and had similar experience to me. We were both considered ‘young’ to be in the academy. We met for coffee after our presentations and started to realise the synergies between our research interests and passions. Finally I found someone who was like me who wanted to achieve the same goals for their research! My mind started buzzing.

Over the next year our ideas started to converge. We worked together on a book chapter that lead to a co-authored book. This lead to another co-authored book where we realised we could easily work together and support one another. We shared similar goals and expectations. We began to work together on research grants and find other isolated like-minded young researchers. We realised that by working together collaboratively from our institutions across Australia, we could strengthen our research potential. Not long after our first cross-institutional submission we began to see success with competitive grant schemes. As early career researchers we realised we had the potential and strength to produce quality grant applications that could be funded. LaRocco and Bruns (2006) suggest such genuine relationships with colleagues at other universities is also one way younger academics can demonstrate autonomy and professional standing.

Female academic collaboration appears an important coping strategy in the literature. Kochan and Mullen (2003, p. 161) discovered in a study of prolific female academics that an ‘ethic’ of collaboration developed where women created their own “value system which honours collaboration that helps keep them afloat during difficult times”. Debowski (2006) also argues that building research networks helps younger academics boost credibility in their field of research and generate further
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onfidence in their ability. Collaboration for early career academics may also “be prudent in uncertain times as higher education reform advances in higher education contexts” (Tynan & Garbett, 2007, p. 423).

FINAL FLIGHT AND WHERE TO NEXT?

Feminist writers such as Aronsen and Swanson (1991) argue that graduate women should not simply aim for career success in terms of the current system. Rather the goal for women should be to redefine academic authority. While I cannot change an entire system, I realise I am able to redefine the behaviours around me and model the behaviours I consider appropriate.

In my final flight I realise the importance to model professional relationships and conversations that are devoid of discrimination. Archer (2008) found younger female academics acting similar ways in her study. While I cannot change the beliefs of those who have come before me, I can shape and model those coming into the academy after me through active mentoring and engaging in support groups for early career researchers. It is important that we share our stories to develop new meanings and understanding of what is means to be a female within the academy. Such stories are short but they can provide substantial change. Discussing the stories through retellings also allows different interpretations to be shared to help analyse and develop strategies for people in similar situations. Hafernik and colleagues (1997, p. 31) state that by “extending the circle of researchers, we broaden the perspectives and add voices to the field”.

I would also suggest to my former self to seek out other female academics who are of similar age. The research literature suggests that early career academics who are collegial and have ‘corridor conversations’ with colleagues may contribute to professional identity development (Baker Sweitzer, 2009; Mann et al., 2007), leading to a reduction in isolation. It is these relationships that provide supportive mechanisms for all parts of academic life. They provide opportunities to again share stories and construct and deconstruct meaning. Stories also provide opportunities to share different perspectives and viewpoints as a shared meaning in created. Shared meaning can create new understandings of age, gender and ‘lookism’ for female academics.

CONCLUSION

If Australian universities are to find and retain new academic staff, more support is needed for younger academics. Support can include collaboration, mentoring and ‘corridor conversations’. Australian universities could simply benefit from listening to stories from younger staff members.

The self-disclosure shared in this chapter provides insights into my experience of navigating the complexity of academia as a younger female. The chapter has shared my coping strategies in dealing with ‘lookism’. I have been able to reflect on the importance of building collaborations with colleagues of similar age and the
importance of sharing stories with one another to help develop new understandings and perspectives. The sharing stories are also two-fold. Not only does the listener learn about coping strategies, the teller also learns different ways of interpretation of the meaning of the story through continuous retelling to better understand the situation.

In the future it is hoped that the academic community is more accepting of females of all ages and appearances. Through active modeling of how to treat one another, women can enact change in their immediate world. An active approach also allows the support of confidence for future research endeavors. While it is impossible to challenge an entire system, it is possible to bring about small change in the world.

REFERENCES


ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH TO BE IN ACADEMIA? YOU DON'T HAVE GREY HAIR


S. GARVIS


ANNETTE HILTON

4. TEACHER TO ACADEMIC

Becoming and Belonging

PRELUDE

In this chapter, I examine the tensions that arose when I changed occupation and moved from professional practice into the world of academia. I focus on the changes in identity that have accompanied this transition and the factors that influenced these changes. I also reflect on the reasons behind these factors, within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space by looking at experiences in multiple ways: backward and forward, inward and outward, and by positioning the experiences described in place and time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A series of flights are used to describe and reflect on significant events and situations that have shaped my identity as academic and teacher educator. My journey from professional to academic has at times been frustrating, but these frustrations have been outweighed by the excitement and intellectual challenges. On reflection, I realise that I have taken on a new professional identity, although, perhaps blended would be a better adjective than new. I have also come to realise that this change has occurred through a slow metamorphosis tempered and even directed by a strong personal identity anchored by the need to make decisions based on personal integrity.

INTRODUCTION

The tensions and challenges I encountered during the transition to academia after a career as a practitioner are the focus of this chapter. This transition has been from secondary school teacher to doctoral student to postdoctoral researcher to education researcher. This research-focused transition has been accompanied by a parallel transition from school teacher to in-service and pre-service teacher educator and university teacher. I use the term ‘teacher’ to describe my lecturing role intentionally and my reasons for this will become clear later in the chapter. Prior to moving to academia, I spent many happy and successful years as a secondary teacher during which I completed the part-time study of a master’s degree. It was during this period that I began to present professional development to in-service teachers. A year after completing that study, I made the decision to return to university full-time to complete my doctoral thesis. I strongly believe that my years as a secondary school teacher positioned me well to fulfil my various roles in academia. In terms of teacher

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education, this belief was well-founded. I worked as a lecturer and tutor during my Ph.D. and as a lecturer during my postdoctoral fellowship. These were incredibly positive experiences that convinced me that the transition from school teacher to university teacher would be a positive one.

The reference in the chapter title to becoming and belonging is borrowed from Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson (2008) who used this term to describe the doctoral writing experience. This phrase summarises perfectly the way I perceive my experiences in making the transition from teacher to academic. I have not felt the same levels of tension in the process of becoming a teacher educator or university teacher, which has always felt like a natural progression. The ways in which my identity as an academic has been influenced and perceived by others have been the source of tension in my journey so far. Such tensions first appeared early in my doctoral study, my initial perceptions of which stood in stark contrast to the collegiate experience of my master’s degree. I had many years of teaching and leadership experience in the context in which I was researching. I fully appreciated that I was inexperienced in the world of research, but I was certainly not so in the teaching profession and yet I struggled with my perceptions that my teaching expertise was neither recognised nor valued. I was positioned as “expert become novice” (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 136). This was a source of considerable frustration and tension as I struggled to identify with the academic world and leave behind my professional life and identity as a teacher.

Professional identity is not static, rather it is something that develops and changes over time (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). It involves interpretation of self and being recognized as such in a particular context (Gee, 2001). This self-study focuses on aspects of identity formation and change. It examines my journey from teacher to academic and the changes and tensions that have resulted when I’ve felt compelled to change my identity or when my perceptions of self appeared to differ from others’ perceptions or expectations of me. It considers the influences that various aspects of context have on the ways in which identity develops and the tensions that can arise when personal perceptions and values are at odds with those of others within that context. It also questions the impact that personal identity can have on professional identity.

WHO AM I?

My professional life began as a secondary mathematics and science teacher, a career I loved for many years before making the decision to leave high school teaching. Unlike some of my fellow authors in this book, the tensions and challenges I have experienced thus far in my professional life relate neither to gender nor to age. Perhaps they are symptomatic of the length of time I spent teaching before moving to academia – they are related to the apparent differences between my perceptions and those of others of the role that my academic research should play and what is (or should be) important in the role of an academic. My identity as a teacher
continues to influence my developing identity as an academic. These tensions are felt most acutely in my struggle to develop a sense of belonging – a sense of self as an authorised scholar in my field (Wisker, 2008) and an identity with which I can be happy, one that does not conflict with my personal identity and values, and yet also aligns with the perceptions and expectations of others.

IDENTITY

Defining identity is not a simple task and there are various aspects highlighted and perspectives presented in the literature. It is generally agreed that the framing of ‘self’ is an essential concept, but this may be combined with other concepts such as personal history, image of teaching, cultural context, or professional environment (Beijaard et al., 2004). It has been proposed that identity be recognized as a plurality of sub-identities (Mishler, 1999), which generally harmonise and are related to the individual’s different contexts and relationships (Beijaard et al., 2004). People form identities within which they feel comfortable and their identities are influenced by socialisation experiences (Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013). Their identities develop through ongoing reflective processes of relating personal knowledge and feelings to experiences and through the interpretation and reinterpretation of those experiences (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997; Kerby, 1991).

Coldron and Smith (1999) identified a tension between agency (the personal dimension of one’s work) and what is socially given by the structure that surrounds the individual. Thus, the behaviour and expectations of others can have a powerful influence on the way in which professional identity forms (Reynolds, 1996). Southworth (1995) distinguished between the situational self, which develops through interaction with others, and the substantial self, which is comprised of core beliefs and values and is relatively resistant to change. The substantial self is strongly influenced by life experiences and personal identity. Henkel (2000) argued that the key aspects of academic identity are an individual’s unique history, their chosen moral and conceptual frameworks, and their identification “within a defined community or institution by the goods that she or he has achieved” (Clarke et al., 2013, p. 9). What is not clear is the extent to which an individual’s identity is influenced when the institution or community fails to value the ‘goods’ in the same way as that individual.

Identifying similar influences on teacher identity, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) found that institutional stories have a crucial influence on identity. In a study of teacher identity, they found that during a period of change, teachers experienced a loss of their sense of self. Beijaard et al. (2004) described two aspects of teachers’ professional identity: the influence of the conceptions and expectations of others on the one hand and what individuals themselves find important in their personal and professional lives on the other. The latter of these is influenced by both practice and personal backgrounds and experiences. This duality is potentially the source of tensions felt by individuals who find themselves in new situations or changing
contexts in which they question their identity and the ways in which others perceive it. In a study of teachers who had recently made a career transition to teacher educators, Murray and Male (2005) reported similar tensions and stress, noting the difficulties faced by early career teacher educators in establishing a new professional identity. They considered the completeness of the transition to be indicated by a close alignment between the substantial and situational selves.

The transition to an academic context clearly results in identity change. Academic identity formation is “influenced by personal attributes, early socialisation experiences, and contextual factors at both doctoral and initial career level” (Clarke et al., 2013, p. 18). Tierney and Rhoads (1993) proposed a framework of organisational socialisation as a means of understanding the ways in which newcomers to academia form identity and come to understand expectations and norms within their new profession. They identified two stages of faculty socialisation: anticipatory and organisational. The first occurs during the doctoral experience when individuals learn the attitudes, actions, and values of the faculty within which they work and they observe and internalise norms of behaviour. The organisational stage builds on the anticipatory stage and occurs during the early academic career. According to Clarke et al. (2013), individuals “face extraordinary challenges to gain membership into the profession” (p.11) and they may find that the learning experiences of their doctoral studies are “at odds with what the individual ultimately finds at the chosen institution” (p. 11). These contentions call into question the ways in which an individual responds to such conflicts. For example, does the individual simply adopt the practices and norms they have observed? What happens when an individual’s current identity does not align with these new experiences? Is there the possibility that a conflict might influence an individual’s decision to change context rather than change identity? Even when the individual has ‘become’, is there a sense of ‘belonging’?

There are also organisational influences on identity formation when a person is a newcomer in an institution but not to a particular field or profession (Wulff, Austin, Nyquist, & Sprague, 2004), as may be the case when an individual changes institution. Willingness to change institution has been described by some as a signal of commitment to an academic career (Kauffman & Perry, 1989), however, it can place new challenges before the individual in terms of repeatedly learning new contexts – procedures, cultures, and mores within these new contexts (Baldwin, Lunceford, & Vanderlinden, 2005) with the resultant embarkation on new cycles of exploration, transition, and establishment (Hall, 1986).

What is clear from the literature is that identity is neither static nor simple. It is influenced by many factors, including personal beliefs and experiences, contexts, and the socialisation processes that occur within these contexts. The individual continues to develop identity based on reflection and in response to these varied factors. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) used the term ‘a story to live by’ to describe professional identity formation – these stories enable educators to engage in narrative inquiry to make sense of themselves and their practice, thereby shaping and framing
their professional identity. According to Beijaard et al. (2004), resistance to change may reflect the individual’s need to maintain their story to live by.

**MY FLIGHTS**

I am currently an Associate Professor in a university in Copenhagen. My recent move from Australia to take up this position represents to many a major career (not to mention personal) move. To me it is simply one more step along a path onto which I have often felt I stumbled. What follows is the story of how I came to be here and the turning points along the way. While my journey is unlikely to be unique (in fact I have several friends at various stages along a similar path), my hope is that others might find something within it of value to them on their own pathway and that they may relate to in some way. My stories of the six flights of reflection are not always straightforward. They are mostly chronological, although at times, one might identify multiple flights within a situation or period of time. These flights have sometimes been the result of tensions, and at other times, the cause of new challenges and tensions. In some cases, the flights have been the result of a decision that changing contexts was preferable to an uncomfortable change in identity. Perhaps this is because my situational self was not aligned with my substantial self (Murray & Male, 2005), which was resistant to changes that conflicted with my core beliefs. While writing this chapter, I have relived past frustrations and occasionally, old anxieties have come flooding back. I choose not to dwell on the negatives and cannot hold others accountable for the decisions that I make. Indeed, I have endeavoured to portray each flight as a flight towards, rather than a flight away.

**GENERAL FLIGHT**

When I graduated from my science degree, I decided to become a secondary teacher, a career path that I followed for many years. In the beginning, other aspects of my life were prioritised and in some ways my strong personal identity prevailed over the need to develop my professional identity. My multiple life roles took precedence over career ambitions, and I must say that I was perfectly content to be an effective and respected teacher, a role with which I strongly identified. If not for two turning points, I may well still be teaching and happily so. The first of these was thanks to my school principal who pushed me to consider promotion and further study. Giving in to her insistence led to my enrolment in a master’s degree and an opportunity to conduct research in the USA as a Smithsonian Fellow. The second occurred during my master’s studies when several academics suggested I continue my studies. It was the encouragement of these women that gave me the impetus to pursue a Ph.D.

In essence my move to academia was not intended to be a flight from teaching. While I missed school teaching during my Ph.D., I returned to it briefly as part of my research project. Teaching at university during this time was a welcome experience and in many ways did not feel too different from teaching upper secondary school.
I prefer to view this period of time as a logical progression from secondary teaching and since then, my role as a teacher has continued through my work as a teacher educator, both of pre- and in-service teachers. In some ways, I feel that I will always identify as an educator. In the earliest stages of my career transition, it is possible that the strength of my identity as a teacher influenced my ability to identify as an academic. My personal views of the roles that my research and I as an academic should play caused me to question how to make this transition. Certainly this tension surfaced early in my doctoral study. I had a very collegial experience during my master’s course and to some extent, the challenge and enjoyment of this experience influenced my decision to enrol full-time in a Ph.D. It would be fair to say that I did not perceive my doctoral experience in the same way. I struggled to identify with some of my colleagues and constantly grappled with my own need to ensure that my research would make a difference to students and teachers. I was confronted with the realisation that more than anything, my research should lead to publications in top-ranked journals – writing for teacher journals was something I could do if I wanted but not something that others might view as important or necessary. Even when I published a book chapter about my research, I was met with the comment from one very senior staff member that it didn’t matter whether you published a chapter or not but who the publisher was. These experiences reflect the challenges described by Clarke et al. (2013) that newcomers feel in gaining membership in the academy.

I acknowledge that these attitudes and the advice I received may have been underpinned by good intentions and that they may be symptomatic of the increasingly competitive world in which universities find themselves and the consequent pressure they are under to secure funding. It may also be representative of the need for academics to publish in high profile journals to achieve or maintain tenure or promotion. Whatever the reason, at the time I felt disheartened and I questioned whether I could or should adopt these values. My need for an identity with which I could feel comfortable and which aligned with my substantial self was strong. In the end, I resolved to complete my thesis while considering possible future pathways.

FLIGHT UPWARDS (AND DOWN AND UP AGAIN)

After graduation, I was offered a full-time position as a lecturer at another university, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I felt that the ethos of this university and my role within it closely aligned with both my identity as a teacher and my newly developing identity as an academic. There was a strong focus on the students at the university and on delivering quality teaching coupled with a view that research should benefit others and make a difference in the lives of teachers and students. This move definitely represented a flight upwards and I felt valued and part of a dedicated and collegial department. I felt that sense of belonging that I had struggled to find during my doctoral experience. In a sense this experience aligns with the assertion of Clark et al. (2013) that what the individual experiences at the institution in which they work might be at odds with their doctoral experience unless the two
institutions have similar cultures and structures. In my case, the latter institution was at odds in a very positive way. The feeling of belonging I felt at this university reflects a close alignment between my substantial and situational selves (Murray & Male, 2005).

Unfortunately, a number of family circumstances led to a decision to leave this position and return to my hometown. Despite my previous feelings that my alma mater and I might not be a hand-in-glove fit, I applied and was short-listed for a position as a lecturer there. I was unsuccessful and the reasons given reaffirmed the tensions that I had experienced a year earlier. I felt that my years of experience as a teacher and my high university teaching evaluations counted for little, and that despite the fact that this was also a teaching role, the only aspect of consequence seemed to be the applicants’ publications. I am not suggesting that the person who secured the position didn’t deserve it, simply that my perception at that time was that some of my strengths were not valued. There is no question that I view research and publication as important and valuable aspects of academic work. At that time, however, I was struggling to find an identity as an academic that aligned with my own views and values – I was still ‘becoming’ and these experiences certainly didn’t make me feel any sense of ‘belonging’.

At the same time, in fact in the same phone call, I was offered a postdoctoral fellowship. This represented an opportunity to pursue further research with colleagues who I admired, to work with teachers through professional development, and to teach a postgraduate teacher education course. Ironically this course had been part of the lecturing role that I had failed to secure – I was asked to teach it because my previous teaching experience was viewed as a perfect background for the course. Even now, writing this story causes me frustration. On reflection, I should have voiced this frustration at the time, although I felt that as an early career researcher, my opinions might not be valued or supported. Ever the optimist, I was keen to be proved wrong in my interpretations of the situation. I knew I would be working with a great team of researchers and I thoroughly enjoyed lecturing. I believed that my postdoc was an opportunity to make decisions and direct research activities that I was interested in and that had the potential to directly impact on teachers and students.

FLIGHT DOWNWARD

The work of a postdoctoral fellow can be challenging. I had worked hard to shape the grant application along with the other members of the research team, and throughout the course of the project, two of the three chief investigators acknowledged my contribution to the project on many occasions. I was continuing to learn about research and navigating my way along the path of becoming an academic and to belonging. I was dedicated to ensuring that the project was successful but in the end, postdocs are not always named on research grants so while the capacity to publish is great, the grant work goes largely unacknowledged – at least in a way that can make
a difference to one’s career prospects. I paused to reflect on where I was on this path to belonging. I had left a permanent lecturing position to take up a contract position. Toward the end of the second year of the project, there seemed no prospect of a permanent position becoming available and in fact another senior academic stopped me in the corridor to ask if I’d like to work on a second postdoc. I know this was intended to be a supportive gesture and I was flattered at the invitation but, it in some ways, it seemed that I still didn’t quite belong.

It would be wrong to portray this period of time as a flight downward without acknowledging the many wonderful experiences and learning opportunities that it provided. Perhaps it was more a flight to a new reality. I felt a true sense of belonging when I was researching and conducting professional development in the schools that were industry partners in the project. On reflection, this is most likely indicative of a strong alignment between substantial and situational selves in such contexts. Perhaps it is also because my professional sub-identities as teacher, teacher educator, and researcher are in tune with my moral and personal framework when I am researching in school contexts (see Beijaard et al., 2004; Henkel, 2000; Mishler, 1999).

I am still unsure as to whether my perceptions of becoming and belonging (or not) relate to my own frames of reference, which are of course influenced by my sense of who I am and what I value. At the same time, I sense that my perceptions of these two states of being align with some members of the academy and not with others, and that alignment or otherwise is influenced by my colleagues’ own professional and personal identities. Interestingly, when I work with teachers, I get the sense that they view me both as a teacher and as an academic – in this sense, I have a dual professional identity as perceived by others.

FLIGHT TO THE SIDELINES

In some ways, I have probably always been on the sidelines. I have always been happy to be a teacher and my roles as in-service teacher educator and university teacher have reinforced my sense of identity as a teacher – this has not changed. I am proud of my achievements as a teacher in both secondary and tertiary contexts and the ongoing positive relationships I have with my students. My flight to the sidelines is largely a mental one – it did not occur at a single point in time but rather is an action through which I reflect and try to evaluate the reasons behind the decisions of colleagues and the ethos and chosen directions of the various institutions in which I have worked. I have spent much time in self-reflection, in discussion with teaching colleagues from my days as a secondary school teacher and with new colleagues in academia. In some ways, my postdoctoral work gave me an opportunity for sideline reflection. While I was privileged to have a position that allowed me to be self-directed, I still felt that I was working on someone else’s project and often on someone else’s ideas. While the investigators on the project were supportive and encouraging mentors and colleagues, early in the project I identified a closely related sub-project that I was keen to pursue and this was strongly discouraged.
The challenge for me lay with the need to pursue directions that I felt best suited my expertise, interests, and research experience. My time spent on the sidelines in reflection allows me to position myself within the institution, and within the network of academics with whom I work. It has often resulted in self-questioning – who I am, who I want to be, and how those identities that I have developed align with where I am and what is expected of me.

After much speculation about the next step after my postdoctoral research, I determined to apply for positions in areas closely aligned with my background, my future goals, and my current level of experience. This process took far less time that I had anticipated and I found myself working in a Danish university as an Associate Professor.

FLIGHT OF PERSEVERATION

My current role is relatively new and in my view, while it is a flight upward professionally, at this point in time, it is best described as a flight of perseveration. One of the greatest challenges is not professional but is profoundly important – I spend lengthy periods of time separated from my anchors in life – my husband and family. Until this point in my career, I have not had to balance (or perhaps compromise) between my strong personal identity as a partner, mother and family member and my professional identity; however, distance and separation have highlighted this challenge. My husband (also an academic with whom I have researched together for several years) has not yet found work in Denmark and at present continues to work in Australia, which is the reason for our frequent separations. He is always incredibly supportive, but this situation has required numerous strategies for persevering. We use social media and communicate by video-calls with family or friends on an almost daily basis and we continue to seek opportunities to work together on research and publishing projects whenever possible.

On a professional level, I have found myself in an institution that is and has been in transition for several years. I am faced with new challenges of becoming and belonging as well as learning about aspects of a new organisational context such as those identified by Baldwin et al. (2005). There are also challenges beyond the organisational level in a wider cultural context – I am learning about a new university system in a new country in a new language with colleagues from a different cultural background to my own. These experiences are not necessarily negative. Indeed, I have felt a sense of belonging with many of my colleagues from very early in this transition and I have a very supportive program leader. My teaching and broader experiences in education were regarded highly by the review panel when I was appointed as an associate professor. This is one of the reasons that I chose to accept the position – I felt that my background as a teacher was valued alongside my academic skills and experience.

At the same time, there are professional challenges. At present I have had no teaching role. Perhaps due to miscommunication during my interview or simply
indicative of a different system, it was not until I arrived that I discovered that teacher training does not occur in universities in Denmark. This means that the education students at my university are either post-graduate students or undergraduate students studying a field of education other than teaching (e.g., educational psychology or educational sociology). I was employed to work in science education but no courses currently exist in this field. Whether a resolution can be found remains to be seen but I remain hopeful. Another important challenge has been learning about the research environment in Denmark. I have adapted by forming networks with members of the research office who have been very helpful both in helping me locate grant opportunities and in writing the applications, which often require sections in Danish.

Other professional challenges are internal – my own need to understand how things work and to feel that I can make a valuable contribution in my new environment strongly influences the decisions I make and even the ways in which I perceive events or actions. I wrote this section when I was at a science teacher conference in central Jutland in Denmark. Mine was the only workshop presented in English. Before the conference, I was concerned that what I had to say may not quite align with Danish school contexts. Would anyone come given that the parallel presentations were all in Danish? I resolved to work through these feelings and present what I know from my work in Australia has been valuable to teachers there. I needn’t have worried – the room was full and the participants came from primary, secondary, and tertiary science education settings. I have realised that I have the capacity to make a difference through research and I feel that I have developed a new identity as an academic with which I am comfortable and that aligns with my personal identity and values.

For now, I feel encouraged to persevere with the challenges of separation from family, learning a new language, new systems, and new contexts with new colleagues, while maintaining connections to my previous colleagues and professional contexts. I was of course aware of many of these challenges when I accepted the position. While my role is certainly challenging, I have the freedom to pursue research interests that are important to me and I feel more in control of my academic career than ever before. I have the opportunity to learn about educational systems in Europe and to access research conferences and colleagues more easily than I could from Australia and I have the time and space to write both academic and professional papers. While I still need to persevere with my sense of belonging at times (more often than not due to language barriers or systemic or contextual differences), I have a stronger sense of having become.

FINAL FLIGHT AND WHERE TO NEXT?

I don’t feel that I have flown for the last time and at this point in time I’m not sure where my final flight will lead. I am in a place where I chose to be and I am enjoying the challenges. While at the time of writing, my position does not include teaching, this is something I hope to change in the long term. Time will tell. I also miss the
opportunities I had in Australia to work closely with in-service teachers, although this too may change over time. I rather suspect that in the long term, my final flight will take me closer to where I began, at least geographically. To do what in particular, and in which institution remain to be seen and that’s part of the excitement and challenge of academia. In a perfect world, it would be to a role in which I could combine my love of teaching and my enthusiasm for research to make a difference to those around me. Perhaps this will require my final flight to be in a new direction altogether.

Through the process of writing this chapter, I have come to realise that my identity certainly comprises several sub-identities as described by Mishler (1999). At times, my sense of self as a teacher is stronger than my academic identity, while at others, the reverse is true. For me, this is often situational – related to the context or circumstance. For example, when I work with in-service teachers, I adopt both identities. When I work with students, I am still the teacher (although I bring my own and others’ research to this work), when I present at a research conference, my academic identity overshadows my teacher identity (although it is always there in the background). These experiences reflect findings in the literature that we take on different but related identities depending on the social context (see Beijaard et al., 2004). In line with Reynolds’ (1996) suggestion that context, others’ expectations, and what an individual allows to impact on him or her affects identity, I have learned that I need to identify, not only as a teacher or as an academic but also with those around me and with the institution in which I work. This need is powerful and constantly influences my decision to persevere or to take flight to new opportunities. Above all, I believe that my need to align aspects of my professional identity with my personal identity, values, and beliefs will continue to guide the decisions I make and the flights I undertake.

CONCLUSION

I have a situational professional self that adapts to changing situations and contexts but which to a large extent is governed or at least underpinned by my substantial and personal selves. Over time, my substantial self has evolved through a process of ongoing reflection to account for new or changing beliefs and values. These identities have become more closely aligned over time as I have come to understand and develop a better sense of who and what I am, what I want to be, and what I can or should allow to influence this sense of self. My experiences echo those described in the literature (e.g., Clarke et al., 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Henkel, 2000; Murray & Male, 2005). My identity is strongly shaped by my personal values, goals, sense of integrity, and loyalty to others. I feel a stronger sense of belonging with colleagues who share my goals or who at least respect them. Although contextual and social factors may not always have a direct impact on my identity, my perceptions of them may cause me to pause and reflect. Often it is the result of this reflection that determines whether or not they exert an influence. It is the misalignment of such factors that is the source of tension and challenge. In the end, it is a question of balance – the path to satisfaction in becoming and belonging requires alignment between personal and professional
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... selves. Perhaps beyond becoming and belonging, the most important thing is being – being happy with who you are and what you do and being able to align professional decisions with personal values. I’m sure that the cycles of reflection and change will continue but that I now have a stronger sense of self with which to make the journey.

REFERENCES


5. SENDING OUT A TWEET

Finding New Ways to Network in Academia

PRELUDE

When we take into account the history of concerns around stress, wellbeing, work/life balance and sustainability in academic life (Barrett & Barrett, 2007; Edwards et al., 2009; Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010; Kinman et al., 2006, 2008) it is imperative to find new ways of working in this environment. Not only are young academics and early career researchers calling for a change in how we operate, but higher education is changing, and new ways of connecting, collaborating and forming partnerships are being encouraged, as to new ways to disseminate research to wider audiences both nationally and internationally (Carrigan, 2014). As a reflective practitioner utilising Schwab's (1969) flights, my lived experience as an early career research woman is shared to explore formal and informal connections and networking to navigate the environment of academia. Of particular focus is the use of Twitter and social networking sites as an academic to engage with other academics as a part of a collective process of challenging what it means to be an academic at this current moment in time. The narrative shared highlights how it is possible to seek out academics whom inspire and are being innovative while exploring effective strategies and possibilities of how to be a research active early career researcher.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces my voice and flights connected to finding new ways to network. Specifically my telling and retelling of my lived experiences is closely connected to being the change I would like to see in academia; that is being generous in sharing how to be a successful researcher. The pressures to research and thus publish to disseminate findings have never been more of a focus for higher education. University rankings, strategic and operational plans are all highlighting the importance both for the institutions and the academics on staff. This chapter looks at how I shifted through the barriers and challenges to focus more on my research trajectory post doctoral thesis submission and how I developed a strong writing habit in order to develop my research profile. Key is the shift in how I see myself as an early career researcher who has been able to set goals in approaching networking, both in face-to-face and virtual spaces. This agency has enacted new inclusive ways of working that disrupt behaviours and...
values that are both disturbing and confronting to me in academia. The cultivating and seeking out my professional needs has been paramount in navigating the conflicting competitive environment that academic can at times encourage. The personal-professional identity is presented that has had to be addressed to shift this work habit is shared as I, as an early career female academic, manoeuvre the contemporary demands of universities. The reflective nature of this chapter shares how personal and collegial pressure can be both confronting and motivating, and how networking and seeking advice from others both face-to-face and online through social media is beneficial in achieving a successful academic writing habit and finding new ways to be an academic or as Carrigan (2014) calls it being an open-source academic.

WHO AM I?

Through ongoing reflection I position myself as an ever developing woman who balances a life as an academic with personal pursuits of art making, running, Pilates, mountain bike riding, and personal relationships that help me to be a well rounded individual. I am an early career researcher within the academic world striving to find new ways of working that disrupt some of the boundaries that present themselves while being a young woman in my 30s. I engage in social media professionally, both blogging and Twitter, as a way to engage with others who are searching for smarter ways of working and displaying a generosity that supports inquiring into learning and teaching as well as research.

I grew up in regional Victoria in a country town full of its own expectations about what it meant to be a young woman. I left soon after finishing school to study in Melbourne and have thrived in the opportunities that have been forever present. After studying to be a music teacher, and discovering these dreams were in fact not mine, I was drawn to making a difference through research and working with future educators. I worked fulltime in schools across Melbourne and in rural Victoria and Tasmania in the arts and as a generalist primary school teacher while undertaking both my Masters and doctoral studies. A strong drive to look at problems in new and creative ways drives my enthusiasm to be innovative in approaching education and the arts while working with a vast variety of people who continually inspire me to look at the world in different ways. Working in academia feeds this way of working for me and continually inspires me to look at how I can contribute to new knowledge and ways of being.

ACADEMIC WOMEN AND NETWORKING

When we take into account the history of concerns around stress, wellbeing, work/life balance and sustainability in academic life (Barrett & Barrett, 2007; Edwards et al., 2009; Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010; Kinman et al, 2006; 2008), as a young academic it is imperative to find new ways of working in this space. This calls for a consciousness that can observe, reflect, and disrupt (Lemon & Garvis, 2014). Not only are young academics and early career researchers calling for a change in how
we operate, but higher education is changing and calling for a change. New ways of connecting, collaborating and forming partnerships are being encouraged as to new ways to disseminate research to wider audiences both nationally and internationally (Carrigan, 2014). Transferring networking skills from face to face situations seems only logically when considering how to work in online spaces to build connections, possibilities for future research connections, and to assist in the work associated to being an academic. New ways of working call for new ways of networking, especially in these unsettled times of higher education where there is an illusion that learning and knowledge production is certain and quantifiable” (Smith, 2014). As Fitzgerald (2014) reiterates “we address ways in which knowledge is now shaped, produced and reworked to meet international demands for productive workforces” (p. 1).

Relationship building and networking in academia have long been connected to mentoring (Burke, 1984; Kram, 1985), however, as Rothstein & Davey (1995) report, a broader base of supporting networks has also been identified as influential to career success especially in areas of enhancing job performance, career advancement, and expressive value (i.e. providing psychosocial support). In their study with 800 Canadian university academics, Rothstein & Davey (1995) found that “women had larger networks than men (primarily because of increased number of other women in their networks compared with men – the number of men in networks did not differ between male and female faculty), and received more support, particularly in the area of psychosocial benefits” (p. 24). The research found that “female faculty realise the importance of social support more than men, and make the effort to extend their networks to a greater extent than men to obtain higher levels of support” (p. 24). Likewise, Mavin & Bryans (2002) investigated women academics of management in the UK, who have used informal, collective strategies to challenge existing boundaries of management and their organisations. They reported that the benefit of networking “has facilitated the click of recognition to progress towards changing our organisations (not just changing ourselves) by developing our own political agenda and strategies for action” (p. 249). The action of networking has been to reinforce confidence to become a participant in

the emancipatory process of sharing our experiences [while] we have raised
our consciousness to the inequalities we face. The reflexivity we build into
this research and into the network process allows us to become self-conscious
about many issues otherwise hidden. (p. 248)

Studies such as these reinforce the value of relationships in academia. They also
send a clear message that formal and informal connections are important and crucial
in environments such as universities. For women the interpersonal skills of seeking
out others to talk, problem-solve, and move forward are strengths. The searching
out of networking highlights the constant scrutinizing to see if we as women fit
with the group and to consider if the organisation is a strong fit, often an evaded
and hidden story, but nonetheless an important element (Fitzgerald, 2014; Kanter,
1993). There is a tension between wanting to fit in and not doing what others expect
so you fail or even worse set yourself up for “risk of being isolated” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 85).

“Establishing or belonging to a supportive and trustworthy network of women … can lesson feelings of loneliness and isolation” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 106). These networks offer an opportunity for social exchange where “reciprocal and trust can be built around informal relationships and professional obligations” (p. 106). There is a safe place and a space created and grown that allows for the sharing of experiences, the bouncing off of ideas, and reflecting about actions. A sense of community forms through these practices. As Fitzgerald reinforces, women “participate in ongoing informal networks that [rely] on a range of self-directed and self-selected activities such as meeting colleagues for a coffee, seeking out colleagues in similar roles” (p. 106).

Knowledge today is most often produced in collaboration. It is transmitted in multi-mediated modalities and utilised in transformative ways (Heath, 2014). However, in advancing knowledge and transferring this to contexts for continued impact and reflection uptake can be very slow. Social media is a new form of communication that is changing behaviours and expectations of students, educators, researchers, employers and funding bodies (Minocha & Petre, 2012). Carrigan (2014) introduces the notion of the open-source academic. The rise of this way of working is influencing how knowledge is transferred, and how networks for formed, maintained and grown. When thinking about how new ways of working in academia can utilise networking it is important to also consider how these strategies and approaches can enhance key expectations connected to being an academic – such as research productivity. Carrigan (2014) discusses how blogging and subsequent microblogging to disseminate to a wider audience can be “an experiment in writing a book, one idea at a time” with a “series of threads” (para 3) that link ideas and invite feedback as ideas are being processed. This type of working is “an outlet for continued scholarship” (para 4) that supports the “integration of the blog into his working practices, such that it constitutes the starting point for traditional scholarship rather than something in opposition to it” (para 6). The cultivating of global peers giving feedback and thoughts on research in this space is very innovative in academia currently.

In a study with her colleagues at the Open University in the UK, Fransman (2013) concluded Twitter usage (and non-usage) was a new way of working that was situated in the development of a strong digital footprint that would enhance an individual’s influence in academic networks. As the largest study to date on academics who tweet, it was found that better networking was present as to the ability to develop strong scholarly practices. Budge et al. (in press) in their study on Twitter use as academics produced evidence of new open academic identities, and through their experiences and observations of academic communities of practice suggest that Twitter is a space for actively shaping scholarly identities that challenges behavioral norms. Thus, as Pearce et al. (2010) contend new open scholarly behaviour is enabled by the uptake of new technologies. This chapter explores these notions further by
hearing one perspective of a woman utilising Twitter as a form of networking to seek
social support and explore professional knowledge and ways of being a productive
researcher associated to the professional role of being an academic.

**MY FLIGHTS**

In sharing my lived experiences through the framework of Schwab’s (1969) “flights
from the field” I engage with the notion that “story as data” (Pinnegar & Daynes,
2007, p. 7) as a valid contribution to narrative inquiry. As a reflective practitioner
utilising Schwab’s (1969) flights, narrative of my researcher in- and on-action is
examined as I reflect on the alignment between theory and practice. This reflective
process supports that identification and discovery of stories to live by (Connelly &
Clandinin, 1998; Huber and Clandinin, 2005) and demonstrates how writing and
rewriting as a way to explore ones stories and to reflect (Richardson, 1994) is a
powerful action to process one’s own lived experience while connecting with others
through the sharing journey.

**GENERAL FLIGHT**

I came to studying a doctorate from a space where I needed to find out more. I wanted
to understand more about learning and teaching and what was happening with the
young people I was working with in educational settings. I was also questioning
repeated patterns of curriculum and policy that just didn’t seem to work. I wanted to
know why and find a solution. I had this innate feeling there was more for me. Others
viewed working full time in a school while studying as a high unnecessary workload
but for me it seemed natural. It was inspiring and motivating. The inquiry went hand
in hand and each drove one another. Undertaking doctoral research informed my
practice as a teacher.

My supervisors heavily influenced my higher degree research experiences. My Masters supervisor had been particularly influential in my trajectory and had initiated my first professional five-year plan conversation. This was really the
beginning of me articulating a shift into academia and my love for research. It was
then my doctoral supervisors who assisted this happening with an opportunity to
begin my first sessional teaching of teacher education subjects. This assisted me to
be “in” the academy while still being “out”. I could observe and participate before
committing fully to a career in academia. It didn’t take long for me to become
hooked. I could really see the connection and possibilities in this space of influencing
future educators. While undertaking my doctoral studies and still teaching full
time in a school, these opportunities provided clarity in my teaching and ability
to reflect in and on action about curriculum, policy, education, and my place. The
professional dialogue supported my advocacy of all being learners in the classroom,
no matter what age. There was also something very appealing for me in working
across multiple discipline areas. This way of working is still present in my research
approach. Working across disciplines excites me and sparks the enthusiasm I so thrive on seeing connections and transferring these into practice.

**FLIGHT UPWARDS**

I was so excited to be appointed to my first full time ongoing academic position. I was halfway through my doctorate, had experience as a casual academic and was building a profile in industry that I could bring with me to inform my work in teacher education. I was delighted to be in a world where knowledge production and transfer were focuses. Theorizing and applying new ideas were key drivers for me. I was rather seduced, and still am, by developing a new framework and then seeing it being put into practice within different settings. I always wanted to be an academic who could contribute to making a difference to teachers with practical application of theory. In my first 6 months I thrived on the chance to be innovative and to influence new ways of working. In hindsight I was still naive, as I didn’t realise what enthusiasm meant to colleagues who perhaps were not as fresh faced, passionate and energized as I was. I didn’t realise I would be seen as a threat. I hadn’t considered professional jealousy and the competitive environment academia can be known for. I certainly wasn’t approaching my work or relationships this way. I had always been passionate about my work and loved the opportunity to be inspired by a new project. My saying yes seemed to be noticed by others who said no more often than not. I didn’t have the resilience at this time to be able to handle the reaction from colleagues and thus began a downward flight. My identity was dislocated – as an educator, learner, academic and young woman. I found this most distressing and my core beliefs and values were challenged. I was fascinated and also intrigued at critical times in an academic year that all of a sudden bore witness to ideas, inspiration and innovation grind to a halt. Stress and difficulties for colleagues to juggle the pressures of academia seemed to play out in the transference of some not so desirable behavior. Some I witnessed and some I was on the end of. A clear message was emerging for me that although noticed no one would step in and say stop. This all contributed to a flight downward for me.

**FLIGHT DOWNWARD**

We are constantly being told we have to research and publish. Being *research active* is a buzz term of contemporary academia. The pressure to be research productive is like a pressure cooker – there is a boiling point, steam is gushing out through tiny cracks on the edge, and it’s often too hot to handle. Research and knowledge production is an intricate part of how we position ourselves as academics and is how we promote the work we do. I am often puzzled with how few people talk about what they are doing. I mean really talk, that is share, provide insights or strategies in how they do research. *How many academics actually share how they do research to become and maintain research active status?* I think in all reality not many do share.
Actually, I believe we often hear more from people telling you to write, publish, and research more who are themselves technically research inactive.

For me it was hearing comments such as “if I had to do it hard you do too”, or “I had to figure it out so you should” or comments that were rather personal such as “shouldn’t you be taking time out to have children?” or “I’m surprised at how focused you are being as I thought you would stop and have a baby” that were most confronting when trying to have conversations about research. For me I had not made connections to my professional questions about research to my personal choices. My flight downward was closely attached to comments and ways of being that were confronting and conflicting. They challenged how I saw myself and constructed my professional identity. Upon considerable reflection, and searching for social support from trusted colleagues in and out of the academy, I was able to see experiences such as these as blockers and diversionary experiences. These blockers actually spurred me on more to challenge this way of being in academia. I approached my academic career with the philosophy of why not be the change I would like to see. So as I moved through being passively aggressively being told to figure it out myself I continued to talk to others and seek out people who would actually talk. If I was trying to figure it out how many other people were?

FLIGHT TO SIDELINE

The immediate time post doctorate was a difficult time for me. I didn’t have the post blues connected to being so close to the research and production of a product that are often talked about. I had the post resentment. I was actually really quite angry about the environment I felt like I was moving “in” and “out” of. I was finding the politics of higher education confronting and I was blind sighted by unprofessional behaviour by colleagues. My general health and wellbeing suffered as I found solace in unproductive coping strategies. I continually questioned why and each time I tried to step up and be the best version of me I found that I would fall down, or be rather be pushed down. In some ways these experiences enabled me to reflect and stand to the sidelines but in the moment they were challenging and confusing. I couldn’t understand why the submission of my doctorate was a trigger for silence or negative comments. For so long I had been hearing “get your doctorate it will open so many doors”. Now that I had my doctorate I seemed to have just opened the wire door that was covering the metal reinforced doors. This door seemed fused closed by some. If it hadn’t been for my supervisors who could coach me through the confusing times I think I would have found myself out of academia. It just surprised me at how many fellow academics behaved in threatened ways rather than collegial and supportive ways. I think if I heard the comment “I had to do it hard so should you” or “I didn’t become a professor to help people like you” one more time I was going to explode. I had been privileged to have supervisors for my doctoral studies who were open minded, encouraging and made me think so I couldn’t understand why some colleagues were behaving this way and continued to without any self-awareness of
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impact. These experiences really made me question the environment in which I was positioning myself, and indeed the gender games that seemed to be enacted. For some reason I had thought perhaps more experienced academic females would have been more helpful but actually it was the male professors, professional research staff, and young female early career researchers who assisted me in being able to shift forward and see this behaviour for what it was. I found these barriers very unproductive in attempting to build a research profile post doctorate. The realisation of this made me step to the sideline and reflect upon what type of academic I wanted to be and whom I wanted to access as mentors and research colleagues. It is here in my flight to the sidelines that reflective practice has facilitated my transformed practice.

FLIGHT OF PERSEVERATION

My world as an academic opened up when I discovered Twitter. Prior to exploring social media professionally I was in a state of confusion, frustration and exhaustion. I was entering a revaluation stage of my career and I was very much buried in emotions connected closely to questioning academia. I was six months post graduating from my doctorate and I was beginning to refocus on research possibilities and building partnerships to develop my skills and build my research profile. The institution where I had been employed at the time was emerging on a time of change. For me this was exciting but for many of my colleagues this was confronting whereby change, accountability and research active pressures where bringing out some undesirable behaviour. This energy was very disruptive and was a trigger for me to find others outside of my faculty and university to work and network with. In my adventures of “putting myself out there” I began to overhear some academics outside of teacher education talking about how they were engaging with social media to support their networking and sense of belonging. My interest was sparked and I set myself the challenge to establish a Twitter profile to evaluate if it could be a space for me to engage with professionally. Part of me approached this with hesitation and the thought “hmmm, do I have the time to engage with another social media?” and the other part of me was “I wonder how this works professionally, I’m fascinated to see what else is possible with Twitter beyond celebrities and the latest fashion trends”.

Within a week I was hooked. I was amazed at how many hashtags existed to support academia and research – there was #highered #AcWriMo and #PhDchat to just begin with. I was also taken aback with the links I made with colleagues outside of my current faculty who also were using Twitter for professional interactions. The incidental conversations about Twitter use, insights gained and connections made allowed me to develop the confidence to tweet. I soon realised I had to establish a professional account and a personal account to deliberately refocus the content I accessed and also shared. In hindsight my nickname as my Twitter handle (subconsciously thinking perhaps I would not be in the Twittersphere for long) would not be my first choice for a professional identity however, it has become a branding that enables me to become an approachable individual virtually and with those I meet face-to-face. In some ways
my Twitter profile, linked to my blog where I share my initial research ideas that inform my more formal academic publications, and digital identity helped me emerge from behind the metal door that seemed fused shut into a new world of innovation, collaboration, open communication, support, and collegiality. Others engaging with Twitter were also trying to figure out how to be an active researcher and productive academic in the changing times of higher education but were doing so with a much more supportive and generous approach. My fellow Tweeters were being the change I wanted to be. There was a clear disruption to the competitive nature that is associated to academia. As Budge et al. (in press) reiterate that participating in the use of Twitter as academics with other academics is a part of a collective process of challenging what it means to be an academic. Working productively, writing hints, productivity hints, and ongoing support and encouragement are all enacted and expected academic behaviours on Twitter. This way of working is challenging the landscape of scholarly publishing “with a preponderance of open-source academics” (Carrigan, 2014, para 10). I was very attracted to this way of working and it contributed considerably to my flight of perseveration.

Twitter became my vehicle in which to begin to disrupt the competitive nature and hierarchy of academia that is often associated to the performance culture of higher education (Flaherty, 2014). My Twitter use has moved from engaging with this social media professionally for ideas, keeping in the loop on up to date information, and engaging with other educators to also being a digital tool for my teaching and dissemination of my research. I access information that I share with my students as well as introduce them to Twitter as a digital access point to resources. My access point to information has widened and I enjoy the opportunity of sharing this with students in the higher education context as well. It is especially exciting when students who begin to engage with Twitter have opportunities emerge that they had never even considered.

My ability to disseminate my research has widened also where I share my work and seek feedback from over 1606 Twitter followers (at time of publication). In linking my blog I have had over 14,600 (at time of publication) views since its establishment in early 2012. Then by utilising links to my academic.com profile I can see how many people are accessing my research and downloading my publications. Recently I shared a paper that within 48 hours had 136 downloads. As an early career researcher I could never be able to reach this wide audience without engaging in global social media networks. The power and breath of this way of disseminating is far more outreach than in traditional ways of working. This approach is especially disrupting the traditional ways of working in academia and pushing the boundaries in reporting the impact of research as an early career researcher.

Twitter has become for me an access point for impact information that I may not normally have had the opportunity to see at such an early stage of my career. The innovative ideas that are shared are inspiring and motivating for me. I thoroughly enjoy the chance to hear other perspectives and pose questions. The chance to listen as well as be heard is also appealing in a world where continued growth and meaning
making require active participation and communication. The most profound impact for me has been the chance to engage with others on a global level that I would not normally be able to connect with, listen to, or ask questions to. In some cases the Twittersphere has allowed for contact with a well-established researcher that I would not normally have access to nor feel like I could contact due to my perceived reading of their availability. Twitter breaks these walls down as contact over time and the concise communication of what it is you actually like about their work and what you want to inquire further into is made possible in 140 character tweets.

FINAL FLIGHT AND WHERE TO NEXT?

Like many others using social media, we take risks in enacting our professional selves very publicly in the online space. In addition, there is the risk taking connected to forging new communication patterns, networks, collaborations, and behaviours. This behaviour of challenging norms becomes riskier when we consider how our institutions monitor our online behaviour (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013). However, what comes with participating in these online spaces for me is a renewed, energized and focused community of academics who I can network with. There is a #circleofniceness who are available to proof read a publication, #SUAW (Shut up and write) academics who are ready to focus their time and undertake several #pomodoro sessions (a strategy to dedicate blocks of time to writing). In the month of November #AcWriMo (Academic Writing Month) becomes a dedicated time to write and support others with generous tweets of encouragement and focus to achieve high levels of dissemination of research. We even set goals for accountability on a GoogleDocs spreadsheet where we can record our daily word counts and research focuses. This is shared via Twitter globally. Any questions about flow of ideas, addressing writer’s block or reference requirements are quickly met with help and often multiple perspectives to support the writing process.

I have formed an early career researcher women network of academics I have met through networking online and face-to-face. This is where the confidence about approaching research and disrupting the barriers to being an academic begin to form a normal way of working. We are consciously helping each other, and others, to work in ways that doesn’t conform to the unproductive ways of working we have noticed and been confronted by in our lived experiences. Networking and linking these academics all together for a face to face exploration of being women in academia provides further opportunity and time to unpack strategies, provide support, and discover new ways of working to be successful contemporary academic women.

CONCLUSION

Networks are critical to nurture oneself and cultivate an academic identity that aligns core values and beliefs. We can seek out academics who inspire, find researchers who are being innovative, and explore active strategies and possibilities of how
to be a research active early career researcher. Social media accelerates this with the global anytime, anywhere self-directed new way of working – a wonderful opportunity to have agency. This is where opportunity exists to be “who we are as individuals and to be true to what we do in what we think and value” (McApline & Åkerlind, 2010, p.4).

Laurel Richardson (1994) reiterates the process of writing and rewriting and then rewriting as a way to explore ones stories and to reflect. Engaging in social media as an academic reiterates the process of focusing one’s research profile and exploring new ways to inquire, disseminate, and connect with likeminded academics. Composing a tweet in 140 characters helps negotiate ourselves within the contemporary academic world. Engaging with Twitter also enables building up an instant and personalized Twitter feed (Mollet et al., 2011). It is globalized and accessible anytime anywhere. In this space we have choice about what content we engage with and whom we engage with.

As I have lived, told, retold, and relived my life stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1998) connected to being an early career researcher I have had to negotiate my way of being within and across the various contexts both face to face and virtually. The messiness and generation of a professional digital identity (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013) has been invigorating for me. I enjoy exploring possibilities of how the landscape of scholarly publishing can look different. I have found a new way of working that enables me to share my thoughts and ideas about research while also developing learning and teaching. I can disseminate, ask questions, share my work, and be connected with fellow academics whom also value this way of working. My story, is like many others, and the more we share contemporary ways of disrupting undesirable practices in academia the more it is possible to be the change we want to see as female academics. Informal networks can be engaged with as connective, collaborative and a generous community to enhance research profiles and trajectories.

NOTE

1 The # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to note keywords or topics in a tweet. It is created organically as a way to categorise messages or themes

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