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The Transition Of Identity From Discipline Scholar To Scholar Of Teaching And Learning: Tensions And Reflections On The Path To A Fusion Epistemology

The past decade has seen significantly greater emphasis placed upon teaching and learning, and its associated scholarship (SoTL), in Australian universities and internationally (Vardi, 2011; Hubball, Clarke & Poole, 2010; Brawley, Kelly & Timms, 2009). For many, this shift represents long overdue recognition of the centrality of learning and teaching activities in higher education (Boyer, 1990; Chalmers, 2011). For individual academics however, opportunities to engage more fully in the SoTL may present challenges to their core identities as discipline scholars and practitioners, and involve an epistemological shift towards educational and even managerial orientations (Ramsden, 1998). Such transitions and transformations are seldom easy and often present challenges not only to the academic's own sense of identity, but to their relationships with colleagues and peers within and outside their disciplines.

Academic identity is a complex construct. Becher and Trowler (2001) for example, describe 'tribes' within academia, and identify hierarchies based on discipline identities that embody a discipline-based epistemology. Outside a purely discipline context, Boyer (1990) articulates the domains of the academic's role including research and the SoTL. However, the rapidly changing institutional context is creating pressures and presenting challenges for individual academics, with implications for the formation and nature of identity (Billot, 2010). Clegg (2011) agrees that traditional academic identities are under threat but argues that new ways of constituting and imagining the 'self' are emerging as the pressures of neo-liberalism continue to bite. Opportunities for subversion, resilience and creativity in the creation and enactment of academic identities remain (Smith, 2010). For academics working within professional disciplines, tensions between primary identification as a professional or as a discipline academic may be further compounded by the opportunities and challenges associated with engaging in the SoTL. For some academics, discipline epistemologies may merge with the SoTL forging a fused professional identity.

The authors of this paper are both professional practitioners (law and social work) who entered the university as discipline-based scholars. Their respective interests in T&L have lead them both down a path that has involved transitioning from this discipline-based orientation to identities, and to organisational roles, primarily grounded in the SoTL. Appointed for a two-year period as 'Faculty Curriculum Scholars' as part of a university-wide refresh of the curriculum, the authors have engaged in a process of personal and professional transition, intended and unintended, that has spoken directly to issues of academic identity. As these roles draw to a close, and they prepare to return to their discipline-based positions, the authors reflect on the lessons that have been learned from this journey. In particular, the paper presents a model for understanding the tension between discipline-based and T&L-based orientations and identifies the professional and personal benefits and costs attached to choosing a pathway that leads away from a discipline focus and towards a more generic orientation to learning and teaching.

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Becoming An Academic – Illuminated By Intellectual Autobiography

'How does one become an academic?' This paper illuminates this question using reflective autobiography. Previous research has indicated the usefulness of narrative for making sense of academic practice (Jones, 2011), and the importance of good advice for transitioning to academic careers (Sutherland and Peterson, 2009, 3), so the aim is provide meaningful advice for PhD students using a range of autobiographical narratives. In order to better understand how we become academics, the methodology builds on a variety of alternative, creative, research methods – specifically reflective practice and self-ethnography (Bolton, 2010). It also follows a tradition of using intellectual autobiography to define a field of study (Waks, 2008), make sense of a body of work (Richardson, 1997) or create a profession (Boon, Matthew and Sheward, 2010). For the complete study, a range of academics will write intellectual autobiographies about becoming academics. These will be combined with a more traditional research output in the form of an editorial which draws out the themes that emerge, and shows how they relate to previous research findings. This conference paper presents the preliminary study – the rationale and justification, the first intellectual autobiography, and some tentative themes. The complete study will have three main research benefits: The intellectual autobiographies will be a form of reflective practice for the writers – research in its own right; The finished stories will provide a more personal and contextualised way of knowing what it is to become an academic, complementary with the more abstract research; Finally, the stories will provide a model of reflective practice for PhD students making sense of their own transition to academia.

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'Not All Academics Can Do It': The Haunted Spaces Of Post-Colonial Supervision

In this paper I explore the experiences of non-indigenous academics supervising indigenous (Māori) doctoral students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There is no doubt about the importance of doctoral-level skills and qualifications for the project of cultural renewal and social redress sought by indigenous communities and recent national governments. Given growing numbers of doctoral students and the current under-representation of Māori academics in the academy, particularly in some disciplines, there is a clear need for non-Māori to take up the work of supervising Māori students. However, in a post-colonial context of sometimes fraught, certainly haunted, relations between settler descendants and indigenous people, this obligation can be difficult to enact.

My presentation draws primarily on data from nine interviews with non-indigenous men and women supervisors from a range of disciplines. Situated within a post-colonial theorisation of the academy, I will explore the distinctive features of these supervisors' experiences as they recount them, in particular issues of both academic and/or settler identity that loom within their tales of supervising Māori doctoral