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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

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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