

## Tertiary educator identity: *We know who we are*

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### Abstract

To inform a coherent pedagogy through examined identity as professor requires more than constructing a list of personal descriptors. This paper challenges the dominant discourse through examining identity as fluid, situated and relational. A deep inquiry into tertiary educator identity is grounded in the first author's own defining moments within academia, as well as reflective analysis of literature situated within the context of Australian higher education.

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### Introduction

Numerous contemporary researchers have embraced the epistemological stance of knowledge as situated, voiced, and context-embedded (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Haraway, 1998; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Mills, 1997; van Manen, 2002). Specifically applied to the topic of this inquiry, the research stance means that tertiary instructor identity can only be defined in the context of post-secondary experiences and by inquiring deeply into my lived experience as an academic. Writing from a feminist stance, Taguchi (2005) queried the possibilities of troubling the dominant discourse of what it means to be an educator, and the hegemonic force on teachers to subscribe and reify the existent relationships through problematising the personal. Zembylas (2003) articulated one of his goals as wanting “to challenge the assumption that there is a singular ‘teaching self’ and an essential ‘teacher identity’ as implied in popular cultural myths about teaching” (p. 214). Constructing academe as a profession, my identity is situated *with* rather than *at* my university. There is a dynamic interchange between who I am and what my university is within the constructed place of higher education. This stance on identity implies notions of contribution. As a member of the academy I contribute to its image, which reciprocally impacts my identity.

Our constructions of who we are as professors impact our teaching, research, and service contributions. Consider, for example, the following questions. If new technologies have opened the doors to abundant information, then what are the implications for our roles as professors? What defines our relationship with increasingly diverse student populations? How do we assess students who are situated in rich contexts, yet are English language learners? Consider this question again within the corporate climate of today's higher education institutions, in

which we have increased pressures for lucrative enrolment and low attrition. Further to the corporate climate, can we make an authentic contribution to our communities and/or to knowledge, when the pressures are to raise the status and financial base of our institutions through repurposing our research so that our proposals will earn national grants? Do we continue to identify ourselves as teachers, researchers, and community contributors when our workloads are increasingly allocated to teaching? This article articulates many questions that form the hidden underlay in the fabric of our minds. The consequences of identity conceptualisations are insidious in that our ontological and epistemological assumptions are largely unconscious. The goal of this paper is to make professor identity salient. We intend to stir-up entrenched notions of who we are as academics so that we might reclaim our identity in relationship. The questions listed above, and those peppered throughout the article, are parts of the critical meta-questions that shape this article—what do we stand-for as academics, and how will this impact our day-to-day practice.

## Situated tertiary educator identity

I, Shelley Kinash, introduced my dissertation research into blind online learners by writing,

The researcher is not a neutral party. I brought values, ideas, and expectations based on what I have read and experienced within a cultural context. As such, my autobiography and particularly how I came to this research needs to be shared. (Kinash, 2006, xii)

I will briefly share my perceived experiences within the tertiary sector, highlighting the critical events and questions that probe my academic identity. I entered the world of academe in my twenties and frequently fielded the student query as to my age. For ten years, I was employed at the University of Calgary, Canada within the department of my master's completion; I frequently served research assistant roles to my colleagues. I was an Instructor in the domain of Professors. Approximately eight years into this tenure, we were all at a dinner party in which one of my colleagues had too much to drink and confronted me with the question – *Who are you? I mean, who are you really?* Shortly thereafter I began my doctoral studies. I was awarded a doctoral fellowship in which I studied grade-school inquiry and subsequently pulled my daughter from her current school into one with a coherent stance. I approached numerous supervisors prior to being taken-on, as the majority were uncomfortable within one or the other of my intersecting research domains of disability studies and educational technology. I completed my doctorate, entered the professorial track, and was laterally transferred into a new department (from disability studies to educational technology). Two years into my new station, I was awarded an academic exchange to the [masked for referee], Australia. The majority of my teaching was within early childhood education; I began my teaching with resistance which evolved to passion. I learned the systems and negotiated the meeting of research horizons with my new colleagues. These are the key critical events that reinforced or triggered changes to my identity as an academic.

Projecting outwards from my phenomenological experience, five interpretations emerge. First, developmental psychology, particularly within the realm of life-stage models, informs identity; my premature entry into the academic world afforded the burden of proving my worthiness. Second, identity conceptualisations can be positioned within a matrix of public/private, articulated/unarticulated. Although I did not answer my colleague in her drunken stupor, her demand for explicit, public

articulation has haunted me to this day. I frequently re-ask her question of myself. Third, there is an interactive relationship between the facets of identity; I sought the equilibrium of coherence between my theoretical stance and my family decisions such as my daughter's schooling. Fourth, we classify our identities according to ordained, cultural constructions of subject domains (e.g., educational technology), and roles (e.g., instructor versus professor). Each is power ranked. Fifth, our identity becomes salient when our stasis is disturbed; I reasserted and reinvented myself as I moved departments and countries. In summary, five aspects of academic identity emerged through my inquiry into my own case history: (1) identity manifests through staged lifework; (2) identity can be positioned within the four quadrants of personal/shared, and implicit/explicit; (3) our personal and professional identities are dynamic; (4) identity is informed and reinforced through cultural constructions, and (5) identity becomes conscious and intentional through change.

## Defining identity

A review of the literature within the context of Western higher education reveals an underlying ontology of persons as bounded entities with a meta-analytical core. Kelly (2006) defined identity as “the ways in which practitioners see themselves in response to the actions of others towards them” (p. 513). This definition evokes a metaphorical image of atoms, each with its own strong nuclear force, bouncing off one another. Elaborating, and yet demonstrating a parallel epistemological stance, Zembylas (2003) defined identity as “how the *teacher self* is constructed and re-constructed through the social interactions that teachers have in a particular socio-cultural, historical, and institutional context” (p. 213). He differentiated his definition from others in the literature by emphasising the role of emotions, “the connection of emotion with self-knowledge” and the multi-dimensional nature with “power as forming the identity and providing the very condition of its trajectory” (pp. 213, 14). The notion of identity is of an internal *self-knowledge* accessed through emotion. Consistent with Zembylas' assertion that there is no *singular* self, Nicoll and Harrison (2003) listed five aspects of the tertiary teacher's identity. The professor's identity is comprised of a negotiated compliment of educator as: “critical practitioner; psycho-diagnostician and facilitator of learning; reflective practitioner; situated learner within a community of practice, and; assurer of organisational quality and efficiency” (p. 31). While these roles are all inherently social, they are *all about me*. As professor, how do I *matter*?

The enacted operational definition of *identity* within Western culture is articulated descriptors of who I am as a coherent entity. To be coherent is to have integrity of person in relationship with others. I am me, and you are you. We can touch, but we are distinct. When I pull back, I am physiologically intact, or am I? Am I mentally intact? You change me. Through our relationship, my thoughts, ideas and emotions are challenged. Do I reconcile these with the essence of me? To what extent are my embodied experiences integrated with my mental representations?

Bateson (2002) presented discreet self as a fallacious notion, disputed by Buddhist and other philosophy. Writing within the context of higher education information technology, Hyun and Gilder (1998) explained that eastern cultures celebrate a unity of humans and nature, whereas rationalism and analytical science leave us “divided from the state of nature” and conceptualise body, mind, and spirit as three distinct, albeit interactive entities (p. 219). The authors explained that languaged constructs such as *identity* are separatist “instruments of [our] own making” (p. 219). In other words, to conceive ourselves as having individual identities, and

to further differentiate our being through application of word symbols is an attempt to separate and divide within and between our *selves*. The authors described the goal to "... subdue and control nature, rewarding competitive success in this pursuit" (p. 219). Within a reflective assignment, one of my graduate students wrote that the primary responsibility of a tertiary instructor is to *put ego aside*. Within the bureaucratic systems and structures we have constructed as the academy, are holistic enactments possible? Consider, for example, competition for tiered publications, promotions and national grants.

If we speak *as if* there is such a *thing* as self within Western post-secondary institutions, then we are still left with numerous operational questions. Bateson articulated some of these,

What ... are the rules for self-knowledge? Under what circumstances is it (pragmatically) better to have no such knowledge than to have erroneous opinions? Under what circumstances is self-knowledge pragmatically necessary? Most people seem to live without any answers to questions of this sort. Indeed, they seem to live without even asking such questions. (p. 127)

As professors, we have dedicated ourselves to knowledge and wisdom. We contest that we have a professional obligation to epistemological examination. We cannot teach if we do not question what it means to know and co-construct. Who are we in relation to knowledge and our learners?

Frankl's (1946) theory of self was challenged as a prisoner in a German concentration camp. Prior to his capture, he was a highly esteemed professor. He described how his captors attempted to strip him of this role and all other signifiers of identity. His role became that of prisoner. His clothing, wedding ring and all other personal possessions were confiscated. He was shaved and assembly-line scrubbed in a hot shower. He described how he survived intact because he exercised the right to the one freedom that could not be controlled—that of attitude. He lived meaning in a seemingly meaningless situation. He grasped onto conceptions of his wife beyond this environment. He continued to live in relationship with his internal image of wife and he maintained a moral and ethical connection with his fellow prisoners. Frankl confronted the notion of man's quest for a greater meaning with a phenomenological stance of living meaning in experience.

Under the concentration camp circumstances does it matter that Frankl's former role was that of professor? Prior to this identity stripping, his notion of who he is would likely be intimately tied to his social role of professor. Within and beyond the concentration camp, he discovered *himself* apart from this role. Living Frankl's newfound meaning vicariously, what questions emerge for us as higher education professionals? Mendaglio and Pyryt (1996) described the notion of *valence*, in that some components of our multi-faceted identity are more important to us than others. Metaphorically, important factors are closer to the *I*. How close is the role of professor to my *I*? Is my place at the university one of job or calling? To what extent am I *professor* beyond my place at the university? What if my position was seen as redundant tomorrow? What if war erupts in my country? What if my tour boat is marooned on a secluded island? What about when I retire?

Identity is at one and the same time, a socially constructed phenomena, and a highly personal and esoteric notion. The research concept of reflexivity as depicted by authors such as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) describes the interactive

relationship of humans and [self] knowledge. We reciprocally inform our conceptualisations of self, whilst constructing the experiential phenomena that derive from our identities. While we can communicate through our shared understandings of concept domains, my personal interpretation of the meaning and embodied experience of identity is unique to me. Further, my working definition of identity as well as my sense of who I am is largely unarticulated, even within my mind's eye. Such complex primordial notions ascend above the power of word symbols. Foucault (1972; 1972–1977) defined power in context. He explained that power is not an isolated commodity. Power exists in and through social relationships. Identity is a parallel and intertwined phenomenon. Our identity exists in context, with and through our relationships with others. Day, Kingston, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) described the interaction between: power in the context of pedagogy, self, and identity.

Such mobilisations [of identity] occur in the space between the 'structure' (of the relations between power and status) and 'agency' (in the influence which we and others can have); and it is the interaction between these which influences how teachers see themselves, i.e., their personal and professional identities. (p. 613)

As such, we cannot examine identity except through lenses informed through our own experiences within the company of others. Foucault (1972; 1972–1977) raised awareness of mindsets of the age. Our interpretations do not exist within a vacuum. They emerge through our embodied time and place power-infused context. Theorists such as Hacking (1999) and Searle (1995) defined this principle as social constructionism. Based on the two words alone, a child I know once playfully guessed a definition. His meaning, "building people" was intriguingly accurate. Applied to the context of tertiary educator identity, the notions of who I am as teacher are shaped through my teaching and learning experiences, my perceptions with respect to how others judge me, as well as my comparisons to the company of others within a power-laden spectrum.

Richards' (2006) working conceptualisation of identity depicted narcissistic self-image as only one component. He analysed classroom exchanges between persons in the established roles of *teacher* and *learners*, querying whether pedagogical interlocution might be achieved through conversation. Richards applied Zimmerman's model of identity to the analysis of interaction; in the course of research, Richards added a fourth component. The three types of identity within this model are: 1) discourse identity, 2) situated identity, 3) transportable identity, and 4) default identity. Discourse identity describes the highly fluid position of the participant in the conversation. One moment I am speaker, and the next, I am listener. Situated identity enacts socio-cultural roles; I play-out what it means to be *professor* through my interactions with students, and thus further entrench these roles. Transportable identity is the sense of who I am that I carry with me into the immediate context. This is the component of identity which is synonymous with self-concept. Pyryt and Medaglio (1994, 1996/1997) defined self-concept as the thoughts and feelings that comprise a multifaceted perception of who I am. There is debate amongst theorists, but we subscribe to the camp who believes we carry an essence of *Shelley-ness* and *Steve-ness* with us across environments and within various groups of people. Some of the facets of my (Shelley's) transportable identity are my Canadian nationality, my female gender, and my role as mother. Richards' added dimension to this model is that of default identity, which "derives entirely from the context in which the talk is produced" (p. 60). For example, at times there is a resonance between content and process, or in other words, we experience that which we are studying. In fulfilling the teaching role within an

online course with online teaching as topic, the learners and I [first author] negotiated and co-constructed our immediate and extended identities over the weeks of the semester. Richards' model depicts identity as fluid, negotiable, and grounded in and of relationship.

## The identity of the Australian Post-secondary institution

Echoes of Richards' (2006) model are situated in Reid and Santoro's (2006) *Cinders in snow? Indigenous teacher identities in formation*. The most poignant challenge to Australian notions of teacher identity is lodged by engagement with Indigenous teachers. Due to the critical importance of understanding Indigenous identity within Australian education systems, extended quotations are inserted to facilitate access to the voice of the authors. Reid and Santoro's research problematises Western notions of individual competitive identities, which are based on a notion that *White is right*. The authors wrote,

Rather than understanding identity as a fixed 'essence' of each individual ... we have set out to explore how individuals function within the structures of a range of discourses in which they operate, and in which they are positioned in different ways. We are seeking to understand how Indigenous teachers 'become' who they are, as they actively construct and perform versions of themselves in the range of social situations they participate in. Our study builds on poststructuralist notions of discourse, power, community and identity to allow an analysis that we hope will promote discussion, reflection and change within both professional education and research communities. In each of these communities, we argue, discursively constructed and racialised practice is centred on a binary logic which positions and prioritises Whiteness as the norm from which all other positions are marked as 'other', weaker and less powerful. (pp. 143, 44)

Four elements of Reid and Santoro's powerful statement resonate for us. First, as argued above, identity is fluid, contextual, and social. We do not have a fixed essence. Second, the authors' statement applies a poststructuralist stance, which acknowledges that there are socio-cultural structures and human-constructed systems that create and re-create roles and status through discourse. Third, Indigenous teachers are perceived as *active constructors* of their own identities. These stories are not limited or over-shadowed by their assigned status as Indigenous. I (Shelley) presented myself as academic at the beginning of this paper; as a White professor I have the privilege of writing my own story, whereas the stories of the oppressed are [inaccurately] written by others. This segues to the fourth element of resonance, which is that of authentic acknowledgement of identity as a tool of power. The authors articulately explained,

A key and lingering image ... is the metaphor of the overlay of White northern European culture over the pre-existing Indigenous culture that it covers and smothers. Indigenous people entering the teaching profession, we argue, are positioned, like 'cinders in snow.' We claim that their Indigeneity is over-determined in their professional relationships and that they are assigned an identity position of 'The Indigenous Teacher' at the expense of any other identity and role as 'teacher'. Further, we suggest that the position of 'The Indigenous

Teacher' is marked as deficient and less able within the discourses of Australian schooling, so that Indigenous teachers have to struggle to attain a sense of self as 'teacher' outside of this pre-determined identity. Finally, we argue that this struggle is complicated by the teachers' identity positioning within their own Indigenous communities, and the set of expectations that are placed on Indigenous teachers by parents and community members who see them as potentially mediating or changing the Whiteness of schooling in ways that will benefit their children. (p. 144)

We may open windows of understanding within this passage by employing lenses of stigma, power-in-context, and interactivity. Goffman (1959) authored a seminal text inquiring deeply into the notion of identity. He examined the frames and codes by which we order our lives. Goffman (1963) extended his analysis by wrestling with what it means to be stigmatised. He defined stigma as impaired relationships with those who are undesirable and/or discredited. He explained that the stigmatised are perceived as "not quite human" (p. 5). Stripping others of their humanity affords otherwise intolerable actions. One of the defining features of humanity is voice; a stigmatised person is silenced, muted, or exploited. Attempts to *speak for* another are often ineffectual.

Despite his or her benevolence in representing those who have been denied access to the means of representation, the [researcher] inevitably functions as an agent of the system of power that silenced these people in the first place. Thus, they are twice victimised: first, by society, and then by the [researcher] who presumes the right to speak on their behalf. (Owens, 1998, p. 79)

People who are stigmatised, such as Indigenous Australians, are uninvited and unheard. They are spoken *for* and *about*. They are denied a multi-faceted identity and pushed into the role of spokesperson. Complex cultures and diverse people are constrained into superficial categories. I (Stephen) learned a poignant lesson in attendance at a post-secondary planning meeting. I turned to the Indigenous member of the committee and asked if she could please share *the* Indigenous perspective. She declined. Ferguson (2001) analysed parallel enactments of stigma within the context of blindness. He explained that people base their ideas with respect to what it means to be blind on the sole blind person they have met or simply seen. Shapiro (1993) analysed public discomfort with what we consider to be *out of the ordinary*; we cast people into super-human roles. Within the passage quoted above, Reid and Santoro wrote that the teacher role is "complicated by the teachers' identity positioning within their own Indigenous communities." Foucault (1972, 1972–1977) analysed power in context, demonstrating how power relationships are maintained by unconscious mindsets of the age. Jernigan (1963/1990, 1965) explained how the stigmatised are within the same culture, and thus subject to enacting the same stereotypes as the oppressors, enacting masochistic outcomes. Hacking (1969) labelled this phenomena *interactivity*, explaining that stigmatised people see themselves as they are seen by others, thereby entrenching the oppression.

In summary, Reid and Santoro's paper leaves Australian tertiary educators with vital questions. Who am I in relationship to Indigenous Australians? How do I restore relationships between teachers and learners within the pedagogical context? How might I embrace traditions, and reveal hidden histories? How might I deepen my understanding of myself within *home, family and community* by exploring these

meaningful values of Indigenous educators? How do I invite and engage diverse voices? How do I maintain my role as lifelong learner?

As keynote speaker to the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education Conference, Gunn (2000) presented a climate analysis of contemporary higher education informed by her own academic experiences as well as extensive reading of literature published in developed countries throughout the world. She discussed the changing nature of knowledge shifting the role of the academic from information disseminator and controller to pedagogical stances of partnership and globalisation. She examined the shift in motivations from colonial to financial. She emphasised the impact of new technologies, on such factors as the composition of the student body, and the expectations of academics. Specifically applicable to tertiary educator identity, Gunn asserted that the combination of these factors are manifesting in increased personal stress. She cited outcomes such as demand for increased pace of production emphasising economic outcomes and de-emphasising pedagogy and contributions to knowledge, more administrative micromanaging, and reduced independence and job security. Gunn countered the *truth* depicting universities as entrenched bureaucracies, interpreting her analysis of change in higher education as indicative of dynamic, responsive systems.

Murray and Dollery (2005) countered Gunn's (2000) perspective, depicting universities as "highly traditional and inflexible public service agencies" (p. 386). The authors described the misfit between this university identity with the demands of "an increasingly fluid and deregulated commercial environment" as transpiring into failure (p. 386). They defined *university failure* with respect to a cost-benefit analysis. The costs incurred by the public-at-large, the professors and the students outweigh the benefits. The authors detailed *costs* in the domains of governance, accountability, information, and most important to this particular paper, quality. With respect to quality, the authors provided evidence of universities: *over-enrolling* students, escalating student/teacher ratios to the breaking point; *dumbing down* course content to increase the *bums-in-seats* accountability within the corporate climate; assigning professors courses based on numbers rather than context expertise, as well as draining teaching schedules, and; forms and procedures that reduce time and energy for teaching and research. Evidence aside, if there is such a climate within academe that professors perceive their contribution to be blocked by these and other variables, then a decline in enacted tertiary educator identity transpires. The factors, as outlined, send a message with respect to the devaluation of teaching (and thus teachers) and learning. If the professor's response is to submit to the cogs and wheels of his daily tasks, without dedicating himself to the quest for learning, then the impact radiate outwards with deleterious consequences for all stakeholders.

Another clue to the changing culture of Australian higher education contexts, with implications for tertiary educator identity, is student behaviour. Dolnicar (2005) observed declining lecture attendance across institutions and sought to explore the reasons. She administered a questionnaire across six faculties of one campus. She received responses from 623 students. She concluded, "the main reasons for students to attend lectures are to find out what they are supposed to learn, not to miss important information and to find out about assessment tasks" (p. 111). She contrasted this with research from the 1970s in which learners were motivated by information, ideas, intellectual conversation, and critical thinking. Dolnicar posed a number of questions emerging from these results.

... do lectures nowadays still fulfil their purpose of transferring knowledge or have they largely become pro-forma offers which are



used by a minority of students? If ‘pragmatics’ (students who attend the fewest lectures) achieve the best results in their subjects, are we using poor assessment tasks to measure learning or are we indeed such bad lecturers that not listening to us improves student marks? Would it be better to try to aim at shifting attitude patterns back to where they were in the 1970s and motivate students to attend more lectures (in which case a detailed analysis of the ‘idealist’ and ‘pragmatic’ segments would be required to investigate ways of implementing such an attempt at shifting student motivations) or should we accept changing tertiary education realities and offer the information they seek online and stop offering lectures? If the most enthusiastic students are older and working, should lectures be offered in the evenings, so the most motivated students can actually attend them? (p. 113)

There are inherent assumptions about tertiary educator identity embedded within these questions. For example, by asking whether “we are such bad lecturers that not listening to us improves student marks,” the author is assuming that our role is one of information disseminator. Is this how we perceive our roles? What are the roles and functions of lectures? Acknowledging the constraints of class sizes and ecological affordances, how will we design our seminars?

The above depiction of Australian higher education within the context of tertiary educator identity gives salience to the question of what matters. So what? Why are professors called upon to examine their teacher identities? Day, Kingson, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) presented a strong rationale.

Sustaining a positive sense of effectiveness to subject, pupils, relationships and roles is important to maintaining motivation, self-esteem or self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and commitment to teaching; and although this research shows consistently that identity is affected, positively and negatively, by classroom experiences, organisational culture and situation-specific events which may threaten existing norms and practices, successive reform implementation strategies have failed to address the key role played by these, and thus, paradoxically, fail to meet the standards’ raising recruitment and retention agendas which they espouse. (p. 614)

These authors depict a cyclical relationship between: a) teachers’ perception of self; b) their construction of pedagogical experiences; c) perceived personal efficacy as teacher, and teacher efficacy, or in other words belief in the social change agency of teaching, and d) *success* experiences, such as transformational learning. The between-the-spaces context of higher education serves as intermediary variable at all phases. These authors concur with Murray and Dollery (2005) that education systems are failing. Day, Kingson, Stobart, and Sammons’ analysis indicated that educator identity is not recognised as a critical factor; acknowledgement of the critical relationship between identity and pedagogical pursuits may be the ameliorative key.

## Conclusion

The title of this paper echoes the message of a text by Dr. R.J. Ferguson (2001) entitled *We know who we are*. Ferguson’s contribution to the literature was in a) using policy archaeology to critically analyse the oppressive forces used through

history to silence the blind, and b) his listening stance to *learn with*, rather than *study* blind citizens. In other words, Ferguson's book made an authentic contribution to *nothing about us without us*. Through inter-textuality, we posit that we interpret this lesson to us as tertiary educators. First, we must critically reflect on what it means to be an academic at this time and place in history. As reviewed above, Gunn (2000) challenged the *true belief* of higher education systems as unchangeable entities; in contrast she analysed the rapid changes that are transpiring. Within this climate of change we must become active agents; we must story our own identities. Identity is situated, fluid, and exists within relationship. As leaders in global knowledge and social change agents, we have a responsibility to examine and possibly overturn our assigned roles. If identified as all-powerful, then those we teach are identified as powerless. Do we want to become marketers, gate keepers, and assembly line workers? If not, then it is time to stand-up and reclaim our identities.

The questions we posed in the introduction to this paper were: a) what do we stand-for as academics, and, b) how will this impact our day-to-day practice. We posit that academics know who we are and thereby the non-negotiable principles and pursuits guiding our practice. As academics we have a passion for knowledge and for supporting others in coming to know. This indisputable call of and to knowledge must undergird our teaching, research, and service. We have an obligation to make our identity as tertiary academics personally-resonant so that we might explicitly articulate this stance through our words and actions. The next phase in our journey of identity as tertiary educators, now that we embrace the importance of who we are, is to explore *how* we know who we are.

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