

**Please cite the Published Version**

Wilkinson, S (2018) The story of Samantha: the teaching performances and inauthenticities of an early career human geography lecturer. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 38 (2). pp. 398-410. ISSN 0729-4360

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1517731>

**Publisher:** Taylor & Francis

**Version:** Accepted Version

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/621752/>

**Additional Information:** This is an Author Accepted Manuscript of a paper in *Higher Education Research and Development*, published by and copyright Taylor & Francis.

**Enquiries:**

If you have questions about this document, contact [openresearch@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:openresearch@mmu.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25 **The Story of [name removed]: The Teaching Performances and**  
26 **Inauthenticities of an Early Career Human Geography Lecturer**

27 This paper offers an autoethnographic account of my first academic year as a Human  
28 Geography lecturer at a ‘new’ public university in the North West of England. This research is  
29 timely and much needed, since teaching at universities in England has recently come under  
30 increasing scrutiny. The Teaching Excellence Framework is a new scheme, which aims to  
31 recognise and reward excellence in teaching, learning, and outcomes, and helps to inform  
32 student choice. This paper is theoretically framed by working at the intersection of Goffman’s  
33 (1959:79) notion of “theatrical performance”, and Butler’s (1990) theory of performativity.  
34 This paper offers insight into the coping strategies, in respect of teaching, that I deployed as a  
35 new university lecturer. Findings are discussed around the themes of: performing teaching  
36 identities, and inauthenticity. With regard to performing teaching identities, this paper  
37 discusses the need for identity to be multiple and shifting, and how, as a young female, I  
38 undertook identity work, in order to perform competence. I also bring to the fore feelings of  
39 inauthenticity; that is, how I did not feel as if I was a genuine academic, and how I fabricated  
40 / falsified aspects of my academic identity in order to ‘fit in’ with the expectations of both  
41 students and staff. As the voice of a new lecturer in her first year of teaching, this paper makes  
42 a useful contribution to the scholarship on early career academics and teaching development.  
43 This paper concludes with recommendations for change in practice-based settings, in order to  
44 assist new lecturers to settle into the job role, and enhance and enrich teaching practice.

45  
46

Key words: Autoethnography; Early Career; Teaching; Performativity

47 **Introduction**

48 This paper offers an autoethnographic account of my first academic year as a Human  
49 Geography lecturer at a ‘new’ public university in the North West of England. Reflections are  
50 included of my experiences with both undergraduate teaching and assessment. Most studies,  
51 to-date, have focused on ‘older’ academics and their responses to the ‘new times’ of  
52 contemporary academia, or what has been referred to elsewhere as “whackademia” (McKay  
53 and Monk, 2017:1251). However, as Archer (2008) questions, what about the ‘new’ generation  
54 of academics who have only experienced the current Higher Education context? This paper  
55 joins a small body of work in redressing the noticeable absence of early career academics’  
56 voices in the higher education literature (Sutherland, 2017). This paper is theoretically framed  
57 by working at the intersection of Goffman’s (1959:79) idea of “theatrical performance”, and  
58 Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity. Goffman’s (1959) work concerns the ways in which  
59 people present themselves and their activity to others, with a focus on the means by which  
60 people guide and control the impression others form. Butler (1990) focuses on identity as the  
61 consequence of continually repeated acts; due to the need for repetition, there is space for  
62 transgressions and “slippage” in identity performances (Butler, 1993:122). This framework is  
63 pertinent to my position as a “neophyte lecturer” (see Morton, 2009:233). In this paper, insight

64 is offered into the coping strategies, in respect of teaching, I deployed as a new university  
65 lecturer.

66 I am writing at a time in which teaching at universities in England has come under  
67 increasing scrutiny. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a new scheme, introduced  
68 by the Government in 2016, which aims to recognise and reward, on a scale of bronze, silver,  
69 and gold, excellence in teaching, learning, and outcomes, and helps to inform student choice  
70 (HEFCE, 2017). It is for this reason that it is important to share stories, feelings and experiences  
71 of teaching in the Higher Education context. Muchmore (2002) has asserted that teaching is a  
72 solitary profession, with limited opportunity to interact and share experiences with colleagues.  
73 When working at a Higher Education institution, there are opportunities for lecturers to interact  
74 with students during lessons and meetings. With colleagues - due to time-tabling and research  
75 commitments - interaction tends to be somewhat limited to more formally scheduled meetings,  
76 and designated peer observations. Put another way, the everyday life of a lecturer typically  
77 involves preparing for teaching, teaching, and reflecting on teaching, in isolation. It is within  
78 the context that this candid paper will be of value to early career lecturers in exposing some of  
79 the lived experiences of the role, and assisting them in feeling as if they are not alone. This  
80 paper is structured as follows: first, the academic context for the study is provided, and the  
81 theoretical framework is elaborated on. Following this, my methodological approach is  
82 outlined. After which, findings around the following themes are discussed: performing  
83 teaching identities, and inauthenticity. This paper is then concluded, and the findings are used  
84 to propose changes in practice based settings.

### 85 **Teaching Identities**

86 In a school-based context, Stillwagon (2008) contends that teacher identity is, on one hand,  
87 defined in its relations to the curriculum and, on the other hand, defined by its relation to  
88 students. Stillwagon (2008) argues that that teacher's personality can be inspirational for  
89 students. The author recognises that performing the teacher is a performance for others in terms  
90 of seeking their recognition, and it takes the development of others' subjective states as its  
91 primary goal. The place of emotion in teacher identity formation has been interrogated by  
92 Zembylas (2003). The author challenges the assumption that there is an essential 'teacher  
93 identity' hiding beneath the surface of teachers' experiences. In a University context, Trowler  
94 and Knight (2000) argue that it is important to reflect upon the processes involved in identity-  
95 construction for newly appointed academics. According to the authors, newly appointed

96 academics engage in considerable identity work; that is, they seek to establish their position,  
97 and engage actively with different cultural fields, (re)making their identities. This leads  
98 Trowler and Knight (2000) to assert that identity is not fixed, static, and bounded, but is instead  
99 in flux, and dynamic. The authors discuss “accommodative identity construction” in academia;  
100 that is, the ways in which identity construction is a social activity, performed for others  
101 (Trowler and Knight, 2000:34). Equally though, the authors reflect on how identity can be  
102 alienated or oppositional. For instance, some new lecturers reflect on feelings of  
103 disempowerment and lack of autonomy.

104 The importance of studying insecurity in relation to identities at work is the focus of  
105 Knights and Clarke (2013). With an interest in the insecurities related to “doing” the job, the  
106 authors expose how fragile and insecure academic selves are manifested. The authors deploy  
107 the notion of “identity work” (Knights and Clarke, 2013:337), highlighting that identity is  
108 something that has to be worked at, and one must continue to achieve it, in order to maintain  
109 it. The authors state that UK universities have various audit guises, including: student  
110 satisfaction surveys, league tables, and the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Such  
111 performative demands have rendered academic identities even more fragile (Knights and  
112 Clarke, 2013). Following on from this, it could be argued that the emergence of a new audit  
113 mechanism, the TEF, further enhances the fragility of academic identities. It is within this  
114 context that this study took place.

### 115 **Teaching Performances**

116 ‘Performance’ can be defined as “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion  
117 which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (Goffman, 1959:14).  
118 According to Goffman (1959), people in work situations present themselves and their activities  
119 to others, in order to guide and control the impression others form. Goffman (1959:17)  
120 contends that people can sometimes act in “thoroughly calculating” manners, projecting  
121 versions of themselves in order to provoke a desired response. Goffman (1959) recognises that  
122 performances are fragile, and can be discredited if destructive information about the situation  
123 is found. According to Goffman (1959), colleagues have to put on the same kind of  
124 performance, and thus come to know each other’s difficulties and perspectives. This is relevant  
125 to academia, in which teaching is a performance for students, and becomes a performance  
126 under measures such as peer observation, the REF, and the TEF (Sutherland, 2017). Goffman  
127 (1959:109;114) distinguishes between a “front region”, a “back region”, and “under-the-stage”.

128 'Front region' refers to the space in which the performance takes place. 'Back region' is where  
129 performances are openly constructed, and where performers can relax and drop their fronts  
130 (Goffman, 1959). This is where, as Goffman (1959:97) contends, "suppressed facts make an  
131 appearance". This paper thus in some ways operates as a 'back region'; this is where I drop the  
132 front that I performed to students and staff, and offer insight into my consciously constructed  
133 performances. It is here then, that I "step out of character" (Goffman, 1959:98). Moreover,  
134 Goffman's (1959) concept of 'under-the-stage' refers to where gossip is shared, and opinions  
135 formed; it typically takes place in private contexts amongst close, trusted colleagues (Trowler  
136 and Knight, 2000). Herein, I reflect on the presence / absence of this realm.

137 In the 1990s, queer theorist Judith Butler deployed a linguistic definition of  
138 performativity, as opposed to a theatrical account of performance, in an attempt to disrupt the  
139 dominant understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality (Gregson and Rose, 2000). Butler  
140 (2011) argues that being a man/woman is not internal - gender is not innate or natural, we are  
141 assigned a gender at birth; this is not a natural 'given'. Rather, gender is continually produced  
142 and reproduced. Butler (2011) claims that gender is performative; that is, it produces a series  
143 of effects. The ways in which people act, walk, speak and talk consolidate an impression of  
144 being a man or being a woman (Butler, 2011). The body becomes its gender through such  
145 bodily gestures, movements and enactments, which are renewed, revised, and consolidated  
146 over time (Butler, 1988).

147 Drawing on Nietzsche, Butler (1990:25) argues, "there is no 'being' behind doing...the  
148 deed is everything". By this, Butler (1990) means that there is no gender identity behind the  
149 expressions of gender, identity is constituted performatively by such 'expressions'. Unlike  
150 Goffman, Butler's (1990:142) performance is not conscious; this can be seen through her  
151 assertion that "there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably  
152 constructed in and through the deed". Gender then, is not a stable identity; instead, it is  
153 culturally constructed through the "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts...that  
154 congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler,  
155 1990:33). These acts are not singular; rather, they are reiterative (Butler, 1993). As these acts  
156 are continually repeated, there is space for transgressions and "slippage" (Butler, 1993:122).  
157 This performative conceptualisation of identity is a useful means of moving away from an  
158 understanding of identities as prescribed, fixed and static, to a reconceptualisation of lecturing  
159 identities as "a constituted *social temporality*" (Butler, 1990:141, emphasis in original).

## 160 **Autoethnographies of Teaching Practices and Experiences**

161 There are a number of studies, internationally, that this paper takes inspiration from. In the  
162 context of the United States, a life history was conducted into ‘Anna’, a new English teacher  
163 at an urban high school, following her initial disappointment in her shortcomings, to her  
164 progression in teaching performances over the course of several years (Muchmore, 2001)  
165 conducts. Throughout the paper, Anna demonstrates increased experience and knowledge; she  
166 realises that participatory and inclusive student-centered teaching is much more effective than  
167 the teacher taking sole responsibility (Muchmore, 2002). Again based in the United States,  
168 autoethnographic research has been conducted into Walck’s (1997:473) “teaching life”. The  
169 author somewhat poetically explores how she can cross the border from an “ordinary class”  
170 comprised of teacher, students, and text, to an “extraordinary place”, where learning occurs  
171 (Walck, 1997:477). The writer is critically reflexive over her teaching experiences, contending  
172 that teaching involves ruthlessly excising what is flawed, and that it is necessary to recognise  
173 that teaching cannot do everything.

174 Elsewhere, readers have been invited to enter the world of a primary Education  
175 specialist teacher. Based on autoethnography conducted in an Australian school, Brooks and  
176 Thompson (2015) discuss feelings of outsidersness, in relation to both the positioning as a newly  
177 appointed teacher, and the physical space designated to the teaching of Physical Education in  
178 primary schools. The authors also consider feelings of insidersness, for instance, in terms of  
179 emotional involvement to the school. The aforementioned studies are in school-based contexts,  
180 and arguably university lecturers have several different challenges. First, many university  
181 lecturers do not have a formal teaching qualification prior to starting their post, and learn  
182 instead by ‘doing’, and thus there may be worries about not feeling qualified, or experienced  
183 enough, to teach. Second, universities are often larger, and teaching can occur over a number  
184 of buildings and often campuses, so there may be less of a sense of community. Third,  
185 academics have the competing demands of having to perform excellence, not only in teaching,  
186 but also in research.

187 There have been several qualitative studies undertaken with early career lecturers in a  
188 UK-based university context. One such study offers a reflective account of experiences during  
189 the first year of full-time teaching within the academic domain of sport and exercise sciences  
190 (Morton, 2009). The author critically reflects on issues that led him to reassess his teaching  
191 practices, and thus arrive at his current teaching philosophy. Some fundamental themes in

192 Morton's (2009) account include reflections on initial hopes and fears; changing his mind-set  
193 of what constitutes skilled teaching; and finding his 'own' style, which seeks to incorporate a  
194 humanistic element in his practice. In addition, researchers have explored how assumptions are  
195 often made about novice lecturers in terms of previous experience, development needs, and  
196 orientations towards the new role. For instance, Gourlay (2011a) utilises a qualitative research  
197 approach to focus on an individual lecturer's experiences of alienation in a new academic  
198 context, and her subsequent decision to leave the academy. Additionally, autoethnographic  
199 research has been undertaken in Wales, UK, to explore aspects of the tutor / student relationship  
200 (Gardner and Lane, 2010). The authors assert that, by adopting an autoethnographic approach  
201 to critically review the process of the personal tutor/student relationship, data is a resource for  
202 both personal and professional development for students and tutors.

### 203 **Methodology**

204 This paper is influenced by a feminist epistemological stance, which considers that all  
205 knowledge is situated, partial, relational, and co-constructed (Rose, 1997); it is for this reason  
206 that I am reflexive about my positionality. I am female, and at the time of the study, I was 26  
207 years old. I had just commenced employment on a two-year, fixed term, contract as a lecturer  
208 in Human Geography. At the start of this study, I was one year post-completion of my PhD,  
209 having completed a one year post-doctoral research fellow post at a different university prior  
210 to beginning the position of lecturer. During the first academic year in my current post  
211 (September 2016-June 2017), I kept a diary documenting my embodied and emotional  
212 experiences as a new lecturer. Over the course of an academic year, I completed approximately  
213 30 autoethnographic diary entries, of roughly one A4 page in length each. The diary provided  
214 a useful medium for me to think through experiences (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). This  
215 links with Richardson's (1994:516) assertion that "writing is also a way of 'knowing' - a  
216 method of discovering and analysis".

217 Autoethnography can be viewed as the convergence of the autobiographic impulse and  
218 the ethnographic moment (Spry, 2001). Louis (1991:365) encapsulates the spirit of  
219 autoethnography, stating: "I am an instrument of my inquiry; and the inquiry is inseparable  
220 from who I am". As such, this method involves personalised accounts whereby the researcher  
221 draws on his/her own experiences to extend understanding of the phenomenon under study  
222 (Holt 2003). Or, as Geertz (1988:79) puts it, the researcher is an "I-witness" to the 'reality'  
223 they experience. Autoethnography thus presents an account sensitive to my embodied and



224 emotional experiences as a new University lecturer. Autoethnography is beneficial in giving  
225 access to private worlds and providing rich data (Mendez, 2013).

226 Autoethnography is not a research approach devoid of criticism, however. Allen-  
227 Collinson and Hockey (2008:209) note that autoethnography can be considered “self-  
228 indulgent...akin to ‘navel-gazing’”. Others are sceptical of the method, as it does not meet the  
229 “holy trinity” (Sparkes, 1998:365) of traditional criteria: validity, reliability and  
230 generalisability. However, as Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2008) contend, this judgment  
231 criteria is derived from positivistic research, and is thus problematic when applied to  
232 autoethnography. Another factor to consider is that autoethnographic writing can lead to the  
233 “vulnerability of revealing yourself” to the judgment of a wider audience (Ellis & Bochner,  
234 2000:738). However, the other side of this is that my candid account may provide a means  
235 through which other newly appointed university lecturers can overcome feelings of isolation.

236 Autoethnography exposes the researcher’s inner feelings and thoughts; this entails  
237 ethical considerations (Mendez, 2013). Writing autoethnographically demands being ethical  
238 and honest about events described, along with the words expressed by people involved in these  
239 events. It was uncomfortable for me to ask people involved in my narratives to give consent to  
240 their involvement in the study, and something I decided against. First, I did not wish to draw  
241 students’ attention to the myself as ‘early career’. Second, I did not desire staff to feel as if I  
242 was observing and scrutinising them, in a context in which academics are already heavily  
243 subject to the gaze of colleagues (for example, through peer observations), and students  
244 (through internal student surveys, and the National Student Survey, for instance). The focus  
245 of this paper is on *myself*, *my* feelings, and *my* experiences. Nonetheless, through my everyday  
246 interactions with staff and students, other people will, by necessity, be mentioned in my story.  
247 In order to ensure confidentiality, participants feature in this paper through a pseudonym  
248 (Morrow, 2008). This protects the anonymity of the participants, both on a day-to-day basis,  
249 and in the process of disseminating research findings.

250 With regards to analysing the data, following Miles and Huberman’s (1994) three-stage  
251 model, a process of data reduction first occurred, in which I organised the data and reduced  
252 this. This involved a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming  
253 the data from transcriptions. Second, I undertook data display, in the form of a table; in this  
254 format, I was able to begin discerning patterns and interrelationships. Third, following Miles  
255 and Huberman (1994), I undertook a process of conclusion-drawing and verification.

256 Conclusion-drawing entailed stepping back to consider what the analysed data meant, and to  
257 assess their implications for the questions at hand. Themes that arose through my data analysis  
258 include: crafting atmospheres; power relationships; gendered understandings of what  
259 constitutes a ‘good’ lecturer; and the emotional experiences of being on a fixed-term contract.  
260 The data presented in the paper focuses on the themes of: teaching performances, and feelings  
261 of inauthenticity. I focus on these themes, considering them beneficial to share in light of the  
262 recent increasing pressures for teaching excellence. Also, this is data I feel comfortable  
263 revealing about myself, my students, my colleagues and my institution, to a wider audience.

### 264 **Performing Teaching Identities**

265 According to Goffman (1959), when an individual moves into a new position in society, and  
266 obtains a new role to perform, s/he is not told in full detail how to conduct him/herself. This is  
267 what I found when starting my role as a lecturer; I had to ‘learn on the job’ (Knight, Tait &  
268 Yorke, 2006). Below, I reflect on how my academic identity had to be multiple and shifting  
269 (Jawitz, 2009), due to competing pressures (Warhurst, 2008):

270 I’m finding that I’m have to become a master of all trades very quickly: teaching,  
271 administration, funding, publications, conferences. I have to perform efficiency and  
272 competency when conducting admin; confidence and likeability when teaching; and success in  
273 publishing in ‘appropriate’ outputs. These skills are very different, and it is quite a struggle to  
274 juggle because each seems the most important

(Author’s diary, October 2016)

276 In the above excerpt, I demonstrate the diversity of skills required when being a lecturer, and  
277 how I had to quickly ‘learn by doing’ (Jawitz, 2007), and master each of these skills, in order  
278 to fit in to the department. Often, I felt anxious and insecure about my failure to meet the  
279 multiplicity of demands (Knights & Clarke, 2013), particularly surrounding achieving both  
280 research excellence and teaching excellence. This resonates with Sutherland’s (2017) notion  
281 that often the energies of academics are pulled in different directions, as they attempt to balance  
282 sometimes conflicting hopes and expectations. Consequently, I had to ‘come to know’ in this  
283 new academic work context, and practice “accommodative identity construction” (Trowler &  
284 Knight, 2000:34). Importantly, I felt as if it was assumed that I was already the “finished  
285 product”, when this was not the case; this is akin to what Barkhuizen (2002:96) found in his  
286 study of a new lecturer in a South African linguistic department.

287 In line with Knights and Clarke (2014:337), I found that “identity work” is both a  
288 medium and outcome of insecurity and self-doubt. In my first teaching week, I had six hours  
289 of lecturing on one day. Having never delivered a lecture before, I felt nervous and unprepared.

290 Given my positionality as a young female, in a predominantly later-career male-dominated  
291 department, I was lacking in confidence that I would be taken seriously by students – an anxiety  
292 articulated by Stillwagon (2008). When ‘playing my part’ as a lecturer, I implicitly requested  
293 students to take seriously the impression that I fostered before them (Goffman, 1959). Goffman  
294 (1959) contends that individuals may be interested in factors such as: conception of self;  
295 trustworthiness; and competence. It was particularly this last factor, ‘competence’, which I was  
296 worried about students questioning:

297 I didn’t sleep very well last night. I was so nervous. I arrived at the classroom over an hour  
298 before my lecture was due to start, just in case of any technological issues. Being very-young  
299 looking, I was worried about being mistaken for a student; what if the students didn’t take me  
300 seriously; what if they thought I wasn’t qualified enough to teach them?

301 (Author’s diary, September 2016)

302 Goffman (1959) asserts that that an audience gleanes clues from a performer’s conduct and  
303 appearance; this allows them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly  
304 similar to the one before them. However, this is what I was worried about. The Human  
305 Geography teaching team at my University is largely male-dominated, and many of the staff  
306 are long-standing. My fear was that students would be comparing me to their stereotypes of  
307 “proper” academics, gained from both their time at university thus far, and the portrayal of  
308 academics in films as eccentric men with greying hair (see Knights & Clarke, 2013). Goffman  
309 (1959) contends that information a person provides about themselves can constitute evidence  
310 as to who they are. In line with this, in the ‘front stage’, I intentionally and consciously  
311 expressed myself in a particular way. I used “defensive practices” (Goffman, 1959:12), or what  
312 may otherwise be known as ‘coping strategies’. For instance, my lectures incorporated  
313 dramaturgical aspects (Hodgson, 2005); I introduced my first lectures with ‘Dr’ clearly on the  
314 opening PowerPoint slide, and made “verbal assertions” (Goffman, 1959:6) about my PhD,  
315 post-doctoral research experience, and publications. Speech and writing, as Butler recognises,  
316 have performative force; such performativity is a consequence of the cumulative power of my  
317 speech, writing and other discourse (Ruitenberg, 2007).

318 According to Goffman (1959:154), “staging talk”, is a common performative  
319 mechanism amongst colleagues. This is where colleagues discuss things, such as “what  
320 will...hold the audience” (Goffman, 1959:155). Further, following the performance, they can  
321 discuss matters such as the “kind of reception they obtained” (Goffman, 1959:155). However,  
322 I did not feel as if this backstage activity always possible in my department:

323 Several months in now, and I expected to feel much more confident about teaching. I don't feel  
324 as if there is anyone I can talk to about how my lecture went. I don't feel as if I can run my  
325 struggles with nervousness and anxiety surrounding lecturing past anyone.

326 (Author's diary, February 2017)

327 In the above, one can see that I expected to have seen a much more incremental transformation  
328 of myself into a competent academic. Further, one can see that, contrary to Goffman's  
329 (1959:156) notion, during my first year as a lecturer, quite a lot of the time, I did not feel a  
330 sense of 'backstage solidarity'; that is, I did not always feel as if I could share my emotions  
331 and feelings regarding teaching with other staff. To be clear, this was due to my lack of  
332 confidence in approaching other lecturers, rather than a lack of willingness on the part of other  
333 staff; I was conscious that everyone is very busy, and I did not wish to burden them.

### 334 **Inauthenticity**

335 'Inauthenticity' in this section refers to both how I did not feel as if I was a genuine academic,  
336 and also how I fabricated / falsified aspects of my academic identity in order to 'fit in' with  
337 both student and staff expectations. Below, I reflect on not feeling qualified for the role of  
338 lecturer, particularly with regard to assessment:

339 It was just assumed that I am confident and comfortable at giving student feedback, whereas I  
340 am not. Before coming here, I had only ever marked first year undergraduate work, where it  
341 didn't count towards the student's degree classification. Prior to starting, I also had a year doing  
342 a post-doctorate in which I was not able to do any teaching or marking. I feel scared to give a  
343 mark which could be 'inaccurate' or cause a student to not get their desired degree  
344 classification, and ultimately job. It is a big responsibility.

345 (Author's diary, December 2016)

346 In the above, I reflect on how assessment of student assignments at university is a "high stakes  
347 activity", with important consequences for students (Jawitz, 2007:185). In line with  
348 participants in Gourlay's (2011b) study, I felt a sense of inauthenticity and lack of worthiness  
349 for the role; the difference being that unlike Gourlay's (2011b) participants, I do have a higher  
350 degree, and experience of advanced scholarly work. This suggests that feelings of not  
351 belonging can occur for academics from both 'practice' and 'academic' backgrounds.

352 Despite attempts to perform competency and confidence through governable aspects of  
353 my expressive behaviour (e.g. verbal assertions), students used ungovernable aspects of my  
354 expressive behaviour as a check upon the validity of what I was seeking to convey (Goffman,  
355 1959):

356 In the internal student survey, I only see ‘redacted’ comments, as I am not a unit leader. This  
357 means that I should not be able to see any comments which are too hurtful. Nonetheless, I did  
358 see a comment, which stated that I am “good, but new, and not confident when teaching”.  
359 Despite attempts to perform confidence, it seems this student outed me.

(Author’s diary, December 2016)

361 Despite attempts to portray myself as a confident lecturer, this student labelled me unconfident.  
362 Interestingly, I was not fully taken in by my own act. Put another way, I did not completely  
363 believe that I deserved the valuation of self, which I asked for (Goffman, 1959). I am employed  
364 to deliver material on topics that sometimes outside my area of expertise. Further, having  
365 several hours of teaching per week, I do not have long to prepare for each lecture. Thus, despite  
366 utilising coping strategies of spending hours learning the lecture material; rearranging ‘stage  
367 props’ such as classroom furniture; and playing with my ‘personal front’ (Goffman, 1959) by  
368 speaking in a confident tone, and using expressive body language, I felt unconvinced after my  
369 lectures that the show had gone as well as I had intended. Nonetheless, this did not stop me  
370 from being left with feelings of inadequacy upon receiving student feedback (Knights and  
371 Clarke, 2013). I was also worried that, being on a two-year fixed term contract, student  
372 comments such as this may be detrimental to my position potentially being extended, or made  
373 permanent.

374 During my first year as a lecturer, I experienced “imposter syndrome”, a  
375 psychopathology in which I considered my accomplishments were less than they are, and I  
376 feared that I would be ‘discovered’ as undeserving of my position (Kauati, n.d.). From a  
377 Goffmanian perspective, the impression of reality fostered by a performance is delicate, and  
378 can be “shattered by...minor mishaps” (Goffman, 1959:49). Butler (1993), though with a focus  
379 on gender, contends that identities are continually performed in order to be sustained. Due to  
380 the need to repeat performances, I found that there was space for transgressions and “slippage”  
381 (Butler, 1993:122). I reflect on the fragility of my performance as a lecturer below, when an  
382 interaction with a student discredited, and threw doubt upon, the projection I was seeking to  
383 convey (Goffman, 1959):

384 It was the end of a three hour lecture. There was another class waiting to use the room. A student  
385 asked me a question. I didn’t know the answer, but I wanted to appear confident, so I made an  
386 educated guess. The student questioned: “surely it’s the other way around though?”.  
387 Embarrassed and stressed, I signposted the student to a book to find out more.

(Author’s diary, December 2016)

389 This situation demonstrates that I was ‘caught out’ by this student, which contradicted the  
390 stance of a knowledgeable academic that I was aiming to perform. I made a “*faux pas*” and  
391 disrupted my intended projection; I attempted to ‘save the show’ by appearing knowledgeable

392 about the literature on the issue (Goffman,1959:184). Nonetheless, the incident left me feeling  
393 humiliated, and perceiving that my reputation would be questioned.

394         It was not only students, but also other academics that I felt the need to put on a  
395 performance for. This is contrary to Goffman's (1959) contention that relaxation of  
396 performances in front of colleagues is common. As a faculty level measure of enhancing  
397 teaching quality and experience, staff are allocated a peer-observer each semester. This is  
398 intended to be a performance measure, and for the sharing of good practice, in order to enhance  
399 teaching quality, and the learning experience. In the excerpt below, I reflect on how I  
400 manipulated my teaching performance to please the peer-observer:

401             Today, I was being peer-observed. I felt extra pressure now to be confident, and in-charge of  
402 the class. I know from Dr Jones observing me on a previous occasion that he does not consider  
403 printing Powerpoint slides for students to be necessary. Whilst I have continued to do this since  
404 my last observation, I did not wish for him to consider I had ignored the feedback. So on this  
405 occasion, I did not print the slides.

(Author's diary, March 2017)

407 From the above, one can see that the lecturer being observed is not [name removed]. It is  
408 someone [name removed] knows the peer observer wants to see, and the sort of teacher that is  
409 considered 'good' by other academic staff (Ball, 2003). The above excerpt links with the  
410 Butlerian notion that reiterative aspects of performativity contains within itself seeds of change;  
411 repetition then, can also provide space for divergence (Hodgson, 2005). Being this 'other'  
412 teacher created 'costs' to the self and set up a personal dilemma for me (Ball, 2003). My  
413 identity was called into question, as I felt pressure to 'fit in' with my established colleagues'  
414 practice (Warhurst, 2008). The result of peer observation, from my experience, was inauthentic  
415 practice and relationships.

## 416 **Conclusions**

417 In this paper, I have provided an autoethnographic story of how I (name removed), a new  
418 Human Geography lecturer, performed my academic identity. In order to do so, this paper was  
419 theoretically framed by working at the intersection of Goffman's (1959:79) notion of  
420 "theatrical performance", and Butler's (1990) work on identity performativity. I have  
421 demonstrated how my academic identity was both multiple and shifting, as I had to become a  
422 'master of all trades'. Moreover, I have reflected on my attempts to perform competence to  
423 students by manipulating my 'front stage' (Goffman, 1959), and playing with my identity. I  
424 also reflected on feelings of inauthenticity; I did not feel qualified to be a lecturer. Further, I  
425 have noted, drawing on Butler (1990), the fragility of my performance as a competent lecturer,

426 and how students ‘caught me out’, and discredited the projection I sought to convey (Goffman,  
427 1959). I also provided insight into the coping strategies I deployed as a new university lecturer.

428         There are benefits to teaching and learning that may occur as a consequence of this  
429 paper. In offering the voice of an early career lecturer, the findings from this study will have  
430 relevance to others who occupy similar roles (Gardner & Lane, 2010); this can be beneficial  
431 considering teaching can be a lonely profession, and there is often a lack of opportunity to  
432 interact with colleagues beyond formally scheduled meetings (Muchmore, 2002). I now make  
433 recommendations for change in practice based settings, in order to improve induction (Trowler  
434 and Knight, 2000), and assist new lecturers to transition into the role, and enhance and enrich  
435 teaching practice. I agree with Sutherland (2009) that senior academics should be attentive to  
436 the lack of pedagogical experience of new early career teaching staff. This is especially  
437 important since the energies of early career academics are often pulled in different directions,  
438 as they attempt to balance sometimes conflicting hopes and expectations (Sutherland, 2017).

439         First, I recommend that newly appointed lecturers are granted a ‘settling in period’, in  
440 which they are allocated a light teaching load and can shadow other staff in the department for:  
441 administrative tasks; and marking assignments, prior to undertaking these practices  
442 independently. This supports Sutherland’s (2009) contention that successful, sustainable,  
443 communities enable newcomers to participate on the community’s periphery, before taking on  
444 the responsibilities associated with more experienced members of the community. Second, I  
445 recommend that universities include more ‘team teaching’, in which lecturers ‘double up’ to  
446 deliver classes. For new lecturers, this would help them build confidence, whilst allowing them  
447 the opportunity to learn from more experienced lecturers. This is what Goffman (1959:166)  
448 would term a “side-kick”. That is, someone who can be brought into a performance, in order  
449 to ensure the comforts of a team-mate.

450         The findings from this paper, concerning the performative practices of an early career  
451 lecturer, coupled with feelings of inauthenticity, are of great importance, since I am writing at  
452 a time in which teaching at universities in England has come under increasing scrutiny; for  
453 instance, with the recent implementation of the TEF. I hope this research has been both  
454 provocative and illuminating enough to encourage early career lecturers from a variety of  
455 institutions and disciplines to conduct auto-ethnographic research into their own experiences.  
456 Experiences as an early career academic vary greatly (Barkhuizen, 2002), and may be  
457 influenced by factors such as the culture, university, and/or the subject. Building a portfolio of  
458 studies will provide an evidence base from which beginning lecturers can gain insight into the

459 occupation. This will assist in preparing beginning lecturers for the transition from a PhD, or  
460 post-doctorate, for example, to a lectureship. This is important, because the transition from  
461 being a doctoral student to an early career academic is currently considered to be characterised  
462 by naivety and confusion (McKay and Monk, 2017).

463

464

465

466

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476

477

478

479

480

481

482

483

484

485

486

487

488



489 **References**

- 490 Allen-Collinson, J. & Hockey, J. (2008). Autoethnography as ‘Valid’ Methodology? A Study  
491 of Disrupted Identity Narratives. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social*  
492 *Sciences*, 3(6), 209-217.
- 493 Ball, S.J. (2003). The Teacher’s Soul and the Terrors of Performativity. *Journal of Education*  
494 *Policy*, 18 (2), 215-228. doi:10.1080/0268093022000043065
- 495 Barkhuizen, G. (2002). Beginning to Lecture at University: A Complex Web of Socialisation  
496 Patterns. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 21, 93-109.  
497 doi:10.1080/07294360220124675
- 498 Brooks, C. & Thompson, M.D. (2015). Insiderness and Outsiderness: An Autoethnography of a  
499 Primary Physical Education Specialist Teacher. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(3),  
500 325-339.
- 501 Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London:  
502 Routledge.
- 503 Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.  
504
- 505 Butler, J. (2011). *Your Behavior Creates Your Gender*. [Online], Available:  
506 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc&feature=youtu.be> [31<sup>st</sup> May, 2018].
- 507 Butz, D. & Besio, K. (2004). The Value of Autoethnography for Field Research in  
508 Transcultural Settings. *The Professional Geographer*, 56(3), 350-360. doi:10.1111/j.0033-  
509 0124.2004.05603004.x
- 510 Ellis, C. & Bochner, A.P. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity:  
511 Researcher as Subject. In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*,  
512 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London: Sage. 733-768.
- 513 Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. & Bochner, A.P. (2011). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum:*  
514 *Qualitative Social Research*, 12 (1), 1-12.
- 515 England, K. (1994). Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research. *The*  
516 *Professional Geographer*, 46 (1), 80-89. 10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00080.x
- 517 Gardner, L.D. & Lane, H. (2010). Exploring the Personal Tutor-Student Relationship: An  
518 Autoethnographic Approach. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 17, 342-347.  
519 10.1111/j.1365-2850.2009.01527.x
- 520 Geertz, C. (1988). *Work and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford: Stanford  
521 University Press.
- 522 Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- 523 Gourlay, L. (2011a). ‘I’d landed on the moon’: A new lecturer leaves the academy. *Teaching*  
524 *in Higher Education*, 16 (5), 591-601. doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.605548
- 525 Gourlay, L. (2011b). New Lecturers and the Myth of ‘Communities of Practice’. *Studies in*  
526 *Continuing Education*, 33 (1), 67-77. doi: 10.1080/0158037X.2010.515570

- 527 HEFCE. (2017). *About the TEF*. [Online], available: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/whatistef/>  
528 [2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2018].
- 529 Gregson, N. and Rose, G. (2000). Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities and  
530 Subjectivities. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 18. (4). pp. 433-452.
- 531 Hogson, D. (2005). ‘Putting on a Professional Performance’: Performativity, Subversion and  
532 Project Management. *Organization Articles*. 12. (1). pp. 1350-5084.
- 533 Holt, L.N. (2003). Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic  
534 Writing Story. *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology*. 2. (1). pp. 18-28.
- 535 Jawitz, J. (2007). New Academics Negotiating Communities of Practice: Learning to Swim  
536 with the Big Fish. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12 (2), 185-197.
- 537 Jawitz, J. (2009). Academic Identities and Communities of Practice in a Professional  
538 Discipline. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14 (3), 241-251.  
539 doi.org/10.1080/13562510902898817
- 540 Kauati, A. (n.d.). *The Imposter Syndrome and Academic Life*. [Online], Available:  
541 [http://www.interparadigmas.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/N1.EN\\_KAUATI.pdf](http://www.interparadigmas.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/N1.EN_KAUATI.pdf) [2nd  
542 January, 2018].
- 543 Knight, P., Tait, J. & Yorke, M. (2006). The Professional Learning of Teachers in Higher  
544 Education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31 (3), 319-339. doi:10.1080/03075070600680786
- 545 Knights, D. & Clarke, C.A. (2014). It’s a Bittersweet Symphony, this Life: Fragile Academic  
546 Selves and Insecure Identities at Work. *Organization Studies*, 35 (3), 335-357. doi:  
547 10.1177/0170840613508396
- 548 McKay, L. and Monk, S. (2017). Early Career Academics Learning the Game in Whakademia.  
549 *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36 (6), pp. 1251-1263. doi:  
550 10.1080/07294360.2017.1303460
- 551 Louis, M.R. (1991). Reflections on an Interpretive Way of Life. In Frost, P.J., Moore, L.F.,  
552 Louis, M.R., Lundberg, C.C. and Martin, J. (Eds.) *Reframing Organisational Culture*. London:  
553 Sage Publications. pp. 361-365.
- 554 Medford, K. (2006). Caught with a Fake ID: Ethical Questions about Slippage in  
555 Autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 953-864. doi: 10.1177/1077800406288618
- 556 Mendez, M. (2013). Autoethnography as a Research Method: Advantages, Limitations and  
557 Criticisms. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 15 (2), 279-287.
- 558 Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*  
559 Second Edition. California: Sage Publications.
- 560 Morrow, V. (2008). Ethical Dilemmas in Research with Children and Young People About  
561 Their Social Environments. *Children’s Geographies*, 6 (1), 49-61.  
562 doi:10.1080/14733280701791918
- 563 Morton, (2009). Critical Reflections from a Neophyte Lecturer in Higher Education: A Self-  
564 Narrative from an Exercise ‘Physiologist’! *Reflective Practice*, 10 (2), 233-243. doi:  
565 10.1080/14623940902786230

- 566 Muchmore, J.A. (2001). *The Story of “Anna”*: A Life History Study of the Literacy Beliefs and  
567 *Teaching Practices of an Urban High School English Teacher*. Annual Meeting of the  
568 American Educational Research Association.
- 569 Muchmore, J.A. (2002). Methods and Ethics in a Life History Study of Teacher Thinking. *The*  
570 *Qualitative Report*, 7 (4), 1-18.
- 571 Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A Method of Inquiry, in: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. (eds).  
572 *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage. 516-529.
- 573 Rose, G. (1997). Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics.  
574 *Progress in Human Geography*, 21 (3), 305-320. doi:10.1191/030913297673302122
- 575 Ruitenberg, C.W. (2007). Discourse, Theatrical Performance, Agency: The Analytic Force of  
576 “Performativity” in Education. *Philosophy of Education*. 260-268.
- 577 Sparkes, A. (2000). Autoethnography and Narratives of the Self: Reflections on Criteria in  
578 Action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17 (1), 363-386. doi:10.1123/ssj.17.1.21
- 579 Spry, T. (2001). Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis.  
580 *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7 (6), 706-732.
- 581 Stillwaggon, J. (2008). Performing for the Students: Teaching Identity and the Pedagogical  
582 Relationship. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 42. (1). pp. 67-83.
- 583 Sutherland, K.A. (2009). Nurturing Undergraduate Tutors’ Role in the University Teaching  
584 Community. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 17 (2), 147-164.
- 585 Sutherland, K.A. (2017). Constructions of Success in Academia: An Early Career Perspective.  
586 *Studies in Higher Education*. 42 (4), pp. 743-759.
- 587 Trowler, P. & Knight, P.T. (2000). Coming to Know in Higher Education: Theorising Faculty  
588 Entry to New Work Contexts. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 19 (1), 27-42. doi:  
589 10.1080/07294360050020453
- 590 Walck, C.L. (1997). A Teaching Life. *Journal of Management Education*, 21 (4), 473-482. doi:  
591 10.1177/105256299702100403
- 592 Warhurst, R.P. (2008). ‘Cigars on the Flight-Deck: New Lecturers’ Participatory Learning  
593 within Workplace Communities of Practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33 (4), 453-467.
- 594 Zembylas, M. (2003). Interrogating “Teacher Identity”: Emotion, Resistance, and Self-  
595 Formation. *Educational Theory*, 53 (1), 107-127.