



## **Michaella Cavanagh**

**Title:** Creating community through creativity: Using found objects to prompt dialogue about the struggle of becoming an academic

The perpetual process of becoming requires us to constitute and reconstitute multiple identities. Becoming an academic can be a difficult and isolating journey for novices. Many new academics struggle with developing balanced researcher and teacher identities in this liminal space. This paper explores my experiences of becoming an academic, through object inquiry, where the object becomes a way to interrogate my internalised beliefs. As part of an autoethnographic project, I used assemblage techniques to create an artefact that would spark conversations about becoming an academic within the university culture. A discarded stencil was selected as the found object, deconstructed and reassembled into an artefact. Presenting and explaining my artefact to others uncovered deeper meanings about my struggles of becoming an academic, dialogic learning and the building of new communities of support. The creative element of 'play' in the assemblage method allowed intuitive, unscripted data collection leading to rich and descriptive findings. My object-artefact was valuable in building community through dialogue, as a becoming academic supported by experienced researchers. Research workshops that foster creativity are valuable for other novice academics, as they provide safe spaces to learn from, share with and dialogue about their experiences.