Title: Betwixt and between: Identity liminality in contemporary careers

Abstract:
We define identity liminality as the cognitive and emotional experience of being in between identities and thus unable to self-categorize, and untangle it from the better-established notion of structural liminality, defined as a situation in which a person falls in between distinct positions in social structure, and is thus difficult to categorize. While structural liminality can trigger identity liminality and vice versa, one may exist without the other. Identity liminality may be temporary or extended, and may or may not be resolved by positive identity reconstruction. Liminality is a time of intense identity work, during which people use narrative, relational and enactment strategies to construct provisional or transitional selves until they are able to restore clarity and coherence to their sense of self. We discuss the implications of our theory for research on identity change and career transition.