Identity Matters

**Session objectives**

* Postdocs gain a better understanding of how other academics have thought about issues of identity
* Postdocs have an opportunity to consider their own identity
* Postdocs gain an understanding of how issues of identity can impact upon their career development (and vice versa)
* Postdocs are able to explore avenues for identity extension or alteration

**Sessions this links to/is preparation for**

This session ties closely with processes of reflection and self-awareness, building on the idea of what postdocs value and how they and others see themselves.

**Session format/s (inc. virtual/face-to-face/live or on-demand)**

* Live, virtual session with a mix of slides, discussion and exercises (could be delivered face-to-face as well).
* A recorded on-demand video presentation.

**Session running time**

* Live virtual session ~55 minutes
* On-demand running time – recording is ~26 minutes

**Session overview**

The session is an exercise to encourage researchers to reflect on how closely entwined their identity is with their career, as many researchers who move beyond academia can be negatively affected by what they consider to be a change to who they are and how they and others view themselves. The session explores these issues and provides researchers with some ideas, tools and self-reflection exercises to help them explore their identity.

The session consists of slides with regular opportunities for participants to discuss and comment on how they relate and identify with these issues. The session also contains an exercise where participants are instructed to create their own timeline of personal and professional events in their lives since starting or ending their PhDs (depending on length of time post-PhD).

**Additional session tools/resources/links**

Some of the resources linked to in this session:

<https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/curations/?share-token=LRZV-20-3E5C-37-777G-CRYG>

Additional resources:

Christopher L. Caterine’s ‘Leaving Academia’ (2020) <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691200194/leaving-academia>

[Caterine’s personal website](https://christophercaterine.com/additional-resources/) also has a list of (mainly North American) leaving academia-specific resources.

Listen to the Squiggly Careers podcast episode 167, [‘Managing your identity at work’](https://www.amazingif.com/listen/your-identity-at-work/) – this page also includes links to useful resources from the Harvard Business Review.

Episode 56 of the Squiggly Careers podcast is [‘How to be yourself at work’.](https://www.amazingif.com/listen/how-to-be-yourself-at-work/)

Chris Cornthwaite’s [Roostervane: Careers with Purpose website](https://roostervane.com/" \t "_blank) is a great place to read up on these issues and see how other people have trodden this path.

For a full list of resources around identity see the postdoc Reflect section of the portal.

**Detailed session running plan**

See appendix for full script.

* Go through session outcomes.
* Introduce the context of academia and identity using examples and quotes from existing and former academics (quotes discuss the feelings researchers might experience within academia and when leaving academic).
* Discussion: ask the participants whether they agree or disagree with the perspectives from the earlier slides, what surprised them and whether any of the emotions described apply to them.
* Explore the concept of identity and how it can be a barrier for career development.
* Cover the concept of identity trajectory and the reflection exercise of creating timelines of personal and professional events.
* Exercise: Ask the participants whether they’ve ever charted their life events alongside their career events. Ask the participants how they feel about the learning curve of a new job. Get the participants to create their own timeline featuring professional and personal highs and lows since finishing their PhD (or starting their PhD if they’ve only recently finished it).
* Discussion: Ask the participants what the term ‘postdoc’ means to them, what the term makes them automatically think about someone who is a postdoc.
* Discussion: Ask the participants about what they think the term ‘postdoc’ communicates to people beyond academia.
* Compare the transition of leaving academia to three other careers where individuals need to navigate changes in identity as they move into a new career – military service, professional dancers, professional football players.
* Explain that issues around identity and academia appear in all sorts of media and publications, providing examples from Vitae, published research and blogs.
* Explore how whilst identity can impact career development, there are also opportunities that come from adopting an open mind and from researchers shifting their perspective about what a career looks like. Identity isn’t fixed or a single entity and postdocs should remember that changes in identity are a transition not a replacement.
* End the session by suggesting various resources and exercises the participants could do after the session, including providing details of the ‘Imagine the future’ 20-30 minute exercise.

**What does running the session ‘live’ add?**

Ability for postdocs to hear about the experiences, emotions and viewpoints of other postdocs and discover they aren’t alone.

Opportunity for postdocs to share their own feelings and experiences with their identity and to be heard and acknowledged by both the session facilitator and other postdocs.

Ability for facilitator to address any issues or concerns.

**Example copy to use to advertise the session on Eventbrite**

Event title (max. 75 characters) – Identity Matters

Details>Description>

Summary (max 140 characters) – This session explores the facets of your personal and professional identities, particularly with respect to career development exploration.

Description –

Come along to this session where we’ll be starting to explore the facets of your personal and professional identities, with a focus on identity with respect to career development exploration.

The session encourages researchers to reflect on how closely entwined their identity is with their career, as many researchers who move beyond academia can be negatively affected by what they consider to be a change to who they are and how they and others view themselves. The session explores these issues and provides researchers with some ideas, tools and self-reflection exercises to help them manage their identity.

**Frequently asked questions/pain points for this session**

No frequently asked questions but the session does encourage participants to consider issues that may affect them or make them feel uncomfortable. Its important to make sure that the session is clearly signposted at the start and throughout as a safe space for the participants, that there are no wrong answers or stupid comments and that every participant response is heard and valued. If the facilitator has their own experience in any of these issues then some sharing of their experiences and feelings at the time and since (without taking time away from the participant’s opportunities to share) can be helpful to open discussions and demonstrate that the session is a safe space to share.

**Time and resource input level**

1. **Basic/Minimum/Lightest** – Signpost postdocs to relevant pages within the postdoc Reflect section and/or in the ‘Growing your self-awareness and career identity’ resources in Learning and Development. You can find a suggested list of resources here <https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/curations/?share-token=LRZV-20-3E5C-37-777G-CRYG>
2. **Intermediate 1** – (all of basic plus some of the following) Hold a watch-party of the ‘Identity matters’ video, pausing at the signposted moments to carry out the discussion points and exercise with the participants.
3. **Intermediate 2** – (all of basic plus some of the following) Run the session using the untailored slides and script. Extend the session by getting participants to undertake the ‘Imagine the future’ exercise described at the end of the session.
4. **Premium/Most intensive** (all of basic and intermediate plus…) Tailor the resource to your institution. Commission an external professional supplier to deliver a tailored session. Organise one-to-one or group career coaching experiences with participants to specifically discuss any issues around career identity. Establish a mentoring scheme with former postdocs who’ve moved beyond academia to provide support and advice about navigating the transition from working in an academic to non-academic environment. Capture and share case studies of former postdocs from your institution talking about how they found the change to their identity as they moved beyond academia.

**Appendix 1. Live Script for session**

**SLIDE 2 – Title**

Hi. I’m [introduce self and role/institution] and I’d like to welcome you to this Identity Matters session.

The title of this workshop has a purposeful double meaning. It’s about matters which relate to identity, but we’re also asserting that identity matters – it’s something we need to pay attention to. As you’ll see, it’s Prosper’s contention that the way you think about your identity matters to your experience of and relationship to career development, because it fundamentally affects your mindset towards career development.

**SLIDE 3 – Session outcomes**

* See how other academics have thought about issues of identity
* Consider your identity now.
* Understand how identity impacts upon career development (and vice versa)
* Explore avenues for identity extension or alteration

One thing I’d like to make clear at this point is that discussions around identity might not click with all of you. For some, parts of these conversations will really resonate and for others the academic identity is less important. This is ok. Everybody is different and everybody has different backgrounds and circumstances. Regardless, it’s useful to be aware of these issues, even if you don’t think that they affect you directly (you may even find that it’s more important than you’d previously realised).

The other point to stress before we get started is that these conversations are important regardless of the career you’re considering, whether it’s within or beyond academia. A lot of what we’re going to cover today is from the perspective of leaving academia as this is where many people realise the importance of considering identity, but these issues are just as relevant for those who want to remain in academia – in fact, elements of identity may play an important role in the decision to stay in or move beyond academia.

**SLIDE 4 – The context. Academics and identity.**

OK, let’s start by considering what we mean when we talk about academics and their identities.

**SLIDE 5 – Something and Everything**

Here’s a tweet from Jennifer Jones:

‘Beginning to realise that leaving academia is feasible, but mentally and emotionally unravelling yourself from the dream of being a professor is something else entirely’.

This tweet from February 2020 is typical of the kind of feelings academics express on their social media platforms, but this issue is rarely brought inside official career development discussions.

[DISCUSSION]

Why do you think that is? What do you make of Jennifer’s statement here?

[TAKE COMMENTS – ALLOW UP TO 3 MINUTES]

**SLIDE 6 – Identity – a hot topic**

Chris Cornthwaite runs a successful career advice website and moved beyond academia after getting his PhD in religious studies. In 2020, he wrote a book about his experiences – Doctoring: Building a Life After a PhD.

“most PhD students I know do not want to leave academia, and they do not turn their back on it lightly. They’ve wholly adopted the sense of self and identity that academia gives. They believe that the thing they are studying, whether it’s grasshopper DNA or Zoroastrian rituals, is actually one of the most important things in the world. They decide that they will devote their lives to it.”

**SLIDE 7 – Identity – a hot topic pt2**

Christopher L Caterine went from being a visiting Assistant Professor of Roman history and Latin literature to moving beyond academia entirely. He now works as a communications consultant and strategist. His 2020 book Leaving Academia: A Practical Guide has been well-reviewed as a window into the very specific journey which those who go from inside higher education institutions and move outside of them go on.

“Whatever led you to seek a new career, you’re embarking on a challenging journey. In its course you’ll experience major changes in three areas of your personal identity:

1. How you view yourself
2. How other people view you
3. How you interact with the world around you.”

**SLIDE 8 – Identity – a hot topic pt3**

Christopher Caterine continues to say:

“Many academics – I’d even venture to say most – find it hard to embrace changes in these specific areas. As a group, we tend to view our work in higher education as more than a career: we consider it a vocation. The doubts we’re prone to feel as we think about working in a different sector thus go beyond the practicalities of not knowing what it’s like to do a new job. In a very real way, we worry that we don’t know who we’ll be if we cease to be academics.”

What interests us here is that if Caterine is right – and there’s ample evidence to suggest that he is – then all of us need to be thinking about identity at the start of this career development pilot and tackling it head-on. Because the identity question could very well colour everything else that happens.

We’re expecting you to have a certain amount of doubt as you explore new and different career pathways, but we want to help you embrace a mindset which will allow you to explore those pathways, rather than shut them down.

**SLIDE 9 –** **Identity – a hot topic pt4**

Now the first two quotations from were books published by American men. So here’s a female UK academic, whose blog post went viral in February 2021. Emily Herring got her PhD from the University of Leeds and last year left a postdoc position at Ghent University. She’s currently writing a book on the French philosopher, Henri Bergson. As she elucidates:

“In academia, the lines between personal and professional identity are easily blurred. If I wasn’t a historian of 20th-century biology and philosophy, then I didn’t know who I was. I knew that losing my identity as a researcher would also mean losing a whole community. I was afraid that if I left, I would disappoint those who had mentored and supported me throughout my studies. I couldn’t help feeling I owed something to academia as a whole, something I had not yet had time to give back.”

**SLIDE 10 – Discussion time**

[DISCUSSION}

So those are some fairly forthright perspectives. Let’s take a step back and consider what they mean to you. Here are three prompt questions, but we can take the discussion in whatever direction naturally arises.   
Do you agree/disagree with these perspectives? Why?

What, if anything, surprised you in those quotations?

Do the emotions described apply to you at all, or have you witnessed them in other academics?

[ALLOW UP TO 7 MINUTES]

**SLIDE 11 – Why identity**

Probably the most comprehensive report to date on moving beyond academia in a European context is Vitae’s 2016 survey ‘*What do research staff do next?’*

**SLIDE 12 – Why identity?**

It’s a report based on a survey of 856 respondents, from 24 countries representing 55 nationalities. One of the key aspects that the report highlights in the move beyond academia is issues of identity:

“the loss of social identity came through as a strong theme in the challenge of leaving HE research. Some respondents reported deep-seated difficulties in giving up their research staff identity”

But let’s be clear that these issues can be worked through

[CLICK FOR ANIMATION]

– the fact that people negotiate an identity shift does not detract from their positivity about their beyond academia pathway. The survey found that:

“Three-quarters [of respondents] are satisfied with their current employment, while only 18% of respondents continue to have aspirations of an academic career.”

[DISCUSSION]

Do those statistics surprise you at all? Why?

[ALLOW UP TO 3 MINUTES]

**SLIDE 13 – Considering…**

[SELF-REFLECTION]

Considering your identity is a natural follow-on to undertaking self-assessment, partly because it involves the following questions:

How would you describe yourself now?

How would you like to be able to describe yourself in the future?

How would others describe you?

We’re going to dip our toes briefly into the waters of identity and give you a minute to think if there are any absolute deal-breakers for you at the moment with regards to your identity. What is currently important to you that others should know about you?

Bear in mind that this may change over time – what I wanted people to think of my when I was 12 is very different from what I’d like them to think now.

[1 MINUTE TO ALLOW THEM TO THINK]

We’ll move on but remember that your answers to the questions on the slide at the moment and your response to the question you’ve just been thinking about are all things you could record in your journal should you wish.

**SLIDE 14 – [You] contain multitudes**

On the last slide we asked you to consider one aspect of your identity – if you have any deal-breakers – but of course identity is inherently complex and multifaceted. The title of this slide is an adaptation of a line from Walt Whitman’s poem, ‘Song of Myself’ – ‘I contain multitudes’. It took Whitman over 1300 lines to write his ‘Song of Myself’ – a good indicator of the vastness identity comprises!

[CLICK FOR TABLE]

We all have lots of selves depending on the context we’re in and what we’re aiming to achieve. Some of these are nurtured by our work, others may feel crowded out by it. You might identify with none, some or many of our example identities. The aim is to get you thinking about how there are different lenses to your own identity, and to begin unpicking that.

**SLIDE 15 – Identity trajectory**

We keep talking about your career development journey and identity too is a journey. Researcher of Higher Education, Professor Lynne McAlpine and colleagues coined the term ‘identity-trajectory’ to think about all the various factors in play as young academics negotiate their career pathways.

“our seven-year research program […] has cumulatively articulated a conceptualization of identity, what we term identity-trajectory, in which the influence of individual agency and personal lives is central to decisions related to investment in academic work and careers’.

If this interests you, you may wish to read McAlpine and Amundsen’s 2018 book Identity-Trajectories of Early Career Researchers: Unpacking the Post-PhD Experience.

**SLIDE 16 – Former postdoc timelines**

In effort to bring in a holistic view of identity, career and life with a capital L, we did a workshop with a group of former postdocs who now work at IBM. This timeline is a composite agglomeration of the commonly encountered events detailed by the former postdocs now working at IBM, showing the sweep of highs and lows from completion of the PhD to getting a job beyond academia. As you can see there are personal as well as professional moments included in the timeline.

**SLIDE 17 – Former postdoc timelines pt 2**

We can even zoom in to see the full range of emotional highs and lows they experienced as they embarked on their new job role.

**SLIDE 18 – Activity: timelines**

[EXERCISE] In a moment you’re going to get a chance to create your own personal timeline in the way you’ve just seen in the previous slides. I’ll share a Mural link in the chat where you’ll find two questions and then spaces for your timelines.

* Have you ever thought about charting your life events alongside your career events before? (Why/why not?)
* How do you instinctively feel about the learning curve of a new job?
* Create your own timeline

**SLIDE 19 – Mural (a digital whiteboard)**

I’ll put the link to Mural in the chat now and when you click on it you should see a screen that looks something like this. Just click the ‘Enter as a visitor’ button, don’t bother typing in a name.

[The Mural Link has been deliberately removed but you can access the resources and the career timelines in the links provided here <https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/curations/?share-token=LRZV-20-3E5C-37-777G-CRYG>].

**SLIDE 20 – Activity: Timelines pt2**

You’ll then see a screen that looks something like this. At the top left of the screen are the two questions and then below and to the right of them are individual spaces for putting your timelines (you don’t need to add lines coming up and down from the centre line, just putting post it notes in the positions).

For the timeline spaces there should be enough for everyone. At the top of each space you’ll see a grey rectangle with the word available and a blue rectangle next to it. Find an available space and drag the blue rectangle over the word available – you’ll see it reveals the word occupied.

To navigate the Mural use the navigation and zoom tool which is in the pink box at the lower right of the screen. You can also zoom in and out using the wheel of your mouse.

If you click on a sticky note you’ll be able to type into it. To make a new sticky note double click into a blank area. You can move sticky notes by clicking and dragging them.

If you make a mistake you can undo it by using Ctrl-Z.

You’ll have around 10 minutes to answer the two questions and make your timeline and the Mural will remain live for the remainder of the pilot so you’ll be able to revisit it whenever you like.

When creating your timeline, think about both the professional and personal moments from the last 5 to 10 years – depending on how long you’ve been a postdoc for and your circumstances, you might choose to start from the moment you completed your PhD, or take it back to the beginning of your PhD.

Ok, you’ve got around 10 minutes to have a go at this.

[Give participants up to 10 minutes to create their timelines]

**SLIDE 21 – Postdoc identity**

Welcome back, I hope you found that interesting and thought-provoking. You could think about creating a timeline or using the one you’ve just created as part of your next journaling session.

**SLIDE 22 – What is a postdoc?**

[DISCUSSION] You’re probably the best-placed audience to answer this question! The term ‘postdoc’ signifies lots of things, not least that you’re very intelligent indeed. But what else do you think the term ‘postdoc’ communicates? Or, thinking of it another way, if you know that someone else is a postdoc, what does that make you think about them? Shout out or pop things in the chat.

[SEE WHAT YOU GET, COMMENT ON THE ANSWERS – ALLOW 3 MINUTES]

**SLIDE 23 – Postdoc – the identity it communicates to others, beyond academia**

[DISCUSSION] So the question is the same, but the audience is different. What kind of identity markers do you think the term ‘postdoc’ communicates to people beyond academia. What might someone think if you introduced yourself with ‘I’m a postdoc’?

[WAIT FOR COMMENTS AND DISCUSS – ALLOW 3 MINUTES]

**SLIDE 24 – Comparable identity transitions**

Academia is an intense world and it requires years of dedicated study and effort to become a postdoc. With the number of permanent academic positions at odds with the number of postdocs on the academic job market, postdocs can feel frustrated by sensing that they lack control over their career outcomes.

While postdocs haven’t been studied as a distinct group in this regard, we have tried to find examples of roles that share the need to negotiate identity as one moves beyond an all-encompassing world, such as that of elite football, professional dance or military service – three groups which, like academia, have their own language, status and require extreme commitment. As with academia, moving away from these worlds can be voluntary or involuntary.

Here's a quote from ‘Anticipating army exit: Identity constructions of final year UK career soldiers’:

“Leaving **military service** requires people to ‘carve […] a different future’, which can feel intimidating. David I. Walker describes a ‘twofold process of identity construction/reconstruction for the leavers who, during the pre-exit period, need to answer the question: ‘‘who or what will I be after leaving the Army?’’ which implies a second and related process in the form of renewed attentiveness to questions of ‘‘who or what have I become?’’’

**SLIDE 25 – Comparable identity transitions pt2**

If the military service comparison didn’t interest you then what about professional dancers. This is another career pathway where people spend a long time training and proving their worth, but the profession doesn’t have space for all of its talent and it’s a time-limited career so even those who “make it” will have to negotiate big career, and thus identity, transitions long before retirement:

Ballet dancers – and professional dancers more broadly – have to negotiate a new identity when they stop dancing, through choice, injury or retirement. Roncaglia notes how “the dancer needs to be re-introduced to the world of work as a changed and changing individual, where a new self ought to be nurtured”.

Roncaglia’s “Retirement transition model for ballet dancers” details the many competing factors which affect this change.

**SLIDE 26 – Comparable identity transitions pt3**

Similar to professional dancers, the world of elite football is physically demanding, sometimes plagued by injury and not a sustainable career long-term. People training for careers in elite football face possible rejection at every stage, given the small number of jobs in this field.

Brown and Potrac emphasise that these “uni-dimensional identities” are quite negative. They discuss the issue in terms of “identity disruption” for young people who have to find alternative career pathways. They report that as some of the deselected players begin to explore other career pathways “they have come to realise the degree to which their involvement in football and uni-dimensional identities controlled and restricted their lives

This is in part why we’re encouraging you to think about your whole self so that you are aware of all the facets of your identity in order to make an informed choice about how you want to shape your identity going forwards.

**SLIDE 27 – Table pt 1 - Vitae**

The identity issue comes across in a variety of genres, across all disciplines, for researchers all around the world. So here we’re going to explore a couple of places where it’s highlighted.

Firstly, in Vitae’s 2016 report “the loss of social identity comes through as a strong theme in the career stories and survey free text responses”

**SLIDE 28 – Table pt2 – Hayter and Parker**

Hayter and Parker’s research article from 2019 reports that “about 20 percent of postdocs seeking academic employment during the study reported that the realization that they will not achieve their long-time career goals resulted in what one respondent called an ‘existential crisis.’” And that “periods of crisis slow a postdoc’s ability to pursue non-academic career options.”

**SLIDE 29 – Table p3 – Chris Cornthwaite**

And from Chris Cornthwaite’s blog in 2020: “The bubble that you live in is a structure of meaning. When you learn about a field and place yourself within it, it’s not only that you’re training for a job. You’re inserting yourself and your life’s calling into a value system that gives you meaning, purpose, and identity. That’s why [leaving academia is] so hard.”

We wanted to show you these examples to highlight that a crisis regarding your identity might slow your ability to pursue career options and explore new opportunities which is why we need to talk about it NOW before this could interfere with your experience of and involvement your own career development.

**SLIDE 30 – Identity opportunities**

Having covered the importance of identity in career development and how some people may find this impacts their decision making or progress, we’re now going to look at identity opportunities and about adopting an open mind.

**SLIDE 31 – Adopt an open mind**

The questions on screen are meant to be rhetorical. None of us know what the future holds, and until we’re required to do something new, we can estimate our capability but that’s about it. And you’d have to know about a multitude of options in order to make a judgement about which career pathways could make you happy. And that is what Prosper is about.

[CLICK FOR ANIMATION]

Following one of the recommendations of LERU’s 2018 position paper, we want to encourage all of you to begin making that shift of perspective from a straight career track to multiple career pathways. And while this was written about postdocs, it’s fair to say that there are few straight career tracks nowadays. One of the podcasts we recommend has the phrase ‘Squiggly Careers’ in its title.

We want you to know that an exploratory, mobile and unique journey through career pathways is something to be proud of.

**SLIDE 32 – Working identity**

Professor of Organisational Psychology and former Harvard Business School faculty member, Dr Herminia Ibarra, has written at length on identity as active rather than a fixed object. She writes:

“This book hinges on two disarmingly simple ideas. First, our working identity is not a hidden treasure waiting to be discovered at the very core of our inner being. Rather, it is made up of many possibilities […] Second, changing careers means changing our selves. Since we are many selves, changing is not a process of swapping one identity for another but rather a transition process in which we reconfigure the full set of possibilities.”

What is useful about Ibarra’s work is that she emphasises possibilities, and identity shift on a sliding scale rather than wholesale substitution. Yes, changing careers means changing our selves, but we are already and always are many selves, leaving us with more opportunities than perhaps we thought we had!

We want to leave you with a positive real-life example of someone who has made the move beyond academia, and contentedly navigated their identity.

**SLIDE 33 – Dr Chris Humphry**

Dr Chris Humphry is a former postdoc of medieval studies and now both a project manager in financial services, but also runs the hugely successful careers website for PhD holders, Jobs on Toast.

In answer to the question ‘Did it require a shift in mindset or a change in how you thought of identity?’ he said:

“You know I guess when you're in academia you have a kind of identity as a researcher, as an academic, as a teacher. And I guess what I'd started to think of is how could I translate that for a non-academic audience. And I think that the sort of thing I was focusing on was e-learning. I could make a kind of plausible sort of bridge. As you know I'm a professional educator professional trainer and so on. I'm moving from that world of academia higher education by bringing that out into a business context. But a lot of the skillset was still the same around education, training, imparting knowledge between people. So yeah I think it did take a little bit of a shift but I kind of quite enjoyed that as well. That kind of coming up with like creating a new sense of who I was and who I am.”

Changing careers and the impact that might have on your identity can be a little scary and it’s perfectly natural to ask questions like ‘who am I if I’m not a researcher?’. But what Chris highlights here is that a shift in job and sense of self can be a positive experience – there’s an enjoyable challenge in discovering something new about yourself, what you’re capable of and who you might be under different circumstances.

What matters is being aware that this journey might not always feel completely comfortable – your timeline will never be completely positive and above the line. But the end goal of finding the right career for you, whether that’s within or beyond academia, is worth the trip.

You can watch Chris’s full case study on the Prosper portal.

**SLIDE 34 – What Next**

So what next? You could consider incorporating some reflections on how you feel about your identity into your journaling.

You could also look at the ‘Considering Identity’ section Prosper site and try some of the tasks there.

**SLIDE 35 – Imagine the future**

[EXERCISE: This could be just as a suggested exercise for after the session or run at this point of the session]

Throughout your career development journey you’re trying to figure out what suits you best and these kinds of thought experiments are a great way to begin trying on different selves and different roles for size.

Take 20-30 minutes to complete these three tasks:

* Picture yourself living 5 parallel lives different to your current one – who would you be and what would your life look like?
* Picture yourself in 3 different jobs beyond academia that have piqued your interest – what would it be like?
* Think about yourself at retirement – what would you want mentioned about you in cards and speeches? What impact do you want to have in your workplace and how do you want to be remembered?

Try not to be judgemental or dismissive of these new situations, or if you do find yourself reacting then reflect on what is it that you’re having such a strong reaction to. These reflections can help you figure out how you feel about different possibilities – you may uncover things you cannot compromise on, and that helps you define your personal perimeter for your career pathways.

**SLIDE 36 – What Next pt2**

What else can you do next? Well, episode 167 of the Squiggly Careers podcast ‘Managing your identity at work’ is well worth a listen. You can find a links other useful portal resources around career identity in Reflect [you can select some to share or highlight from this list for example <https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/curations/?share-token=LRZV-20-3E5C-37-777G-CRYG>]

**SLIDE 37 – Thank you!**

Thank you so much for your time and participation in today’s session. We’ve got a little time for questions if you have any.