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TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF MASCULINE HABITUS AND WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Women and leadership in public relations and communication management: developing a rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development as an ecological radical feminine perspective

Introduction

This chapter challenges existing ideas about women and leadership in public relations (PR) and communication management, which we argue play an active role in maintaining “individualism and the societal status quo” (Prilleltensky and Stead, 2013, p.22). Our approach is to make “the ‘taken-for-granted’ visually explicit” (Leshem and Trafford, 2007, p.100) by drawing attention to notions of leadership that reflect mid-twentieth century US male experiences as typified in a hierarchal ladder metaphor (Inkson, 2004). Allowing that “careers are embedded in the social landscape of a particular place and time” (Sullivan and Crocitto, 2007, p.283), this contextual focus clearly lacks relevance today for women and their leadership ambitions. Indeed, we contend the pursuit of traditional leadership roles should be viewed as one option rather than a normative career path.

In the first of four parts, we provide a brief overview of existing ideas that shape our belief that the needs of a contemporary feminised PR profession are not met by attempts “to rationalise the hyper-complex cultural actuality” (Brown, 2011, p.91). Consequently, in Part 2 we look at the changing landscape in which notions of professional identity and leadership have evolved through multi-dimensional interpretations. This leads us in Part 3 to develop an ecological, radical feminine perspective of women and leadership. Finally, we use a mandorla ‘lens’ to open up thinking and re-imagine an ecologically-driven (or ecosophical) PR and communications practice. Grounded by feminine sensibilities, this can be realised, we argue, by creating a rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development.

Part 1: Feminisation of PR

Although literature “articulates multiple visions of what public relations is and ought to be” (Cheney and Christensen, 2001, p.167) and ‘no definition is accepted universally’ (Shin and Heath, 2021, p.23), the dominant perspective is that PR is a “strategic management function” (Grunig, 2006, p.151). This supports hierarchical bifurcation of PR roles into technicians and managers (Broom and Smith, 1979; Broom and Dozier, 1986), with the former portrayed as ex-journalists (Broom, 1982), junior level workers (Bridgen, 2013) or those valued as a creative or “people person” (Berkowitz and Hristodoulakis, 2009, p.97). Historically, research found a tendency for women to remain in technical positions in PR, while men “expanded their roles” (Broom, 1982, p.21). This favouring of linear male mobility (Payne and Abbott 2005) reflects the bureaucratic career form that Kantar (1989a) said lacks relevance beyond large organizations in the mid-twentieth century.

Given the reciprocal relationship between careers and “demographic attributes” (Lawrence and Tolbert, 2007, p.400), we see little value in the “grand career narrative” (Blustein, 2013, p.13) evident in portrayals of twentieth century careers based on “the white western able bodied middle class male” (Patton and McMahon, 2014, p.135). While normalised as “the career experience for successful people” (Andersen and Vandehey, 2012, p.62), it is over thirty years since Marshall (1989, p.282) offered a radical feminist critique of androcentric career assumptions that “devalue the feminine”. Her position was echoed by Cline (1989) who questioned the emphasis in PR literature and practice on the

desirability of achieving managerial status. Meanwhile, Gallos (1989, p.128) reasoned that understanding of women's career development would also "provide men with viable alternatives to traditional male approaches to careers" demonstrating how "much of the foundational work in career development viewed men as a homogenous group" (Kantamneni, 2013, p.98).

Notably, rapid growth of female employment in PR occurred in the 1980s (Fröhlich, 2004). Focusing on the UK, White et al. (1988) reported a 30-45% increase in the size of the industry in each of the previous five years (counter to increasing unemployment in the wider population) to reach an estimated 19,425 PR managers and executives, plus 15,296 support staff. Based on gender inequity observed in earlier decades in the UK (L'Etang, 2015; Yaxley, 2013) and US (Gower, 2001), this role distinction indicates institutionalised imbalance in career opportunities for women. However, a desire to extend its membership within this expanding – and increasingly female – industry may explain why the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) relaxed its associate membership criteria in 1989, before allowing entry into full membership with an approved qualification and four years' relevant experience (Yaxley, 2018). IPR indicated that women accounted for 44% of its membership in 1994 and 47.8% in 1998 (Yaxley, 2013). We credit the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate university degree PR courses in the late 1980s, along with changes in professional qualifications, as encouraging more women to view education as a career development strategy.

A similar professionalisation pattern is seen in other countries, with an increasing number of females entering the established 'male' occupation (Fitch and Third, 2010). Where a bureaucratic career form is "defined by the logic of advancement", the professional career is "defined by craft or skills, with monopolisation of socially valued knowledge the key determinant of occupational status and 'reputation' the key resource for the individual" (Kanter, 1989b, p.509). Yet, as Fröhlich (2004, p.2) notes "the stable gender-switch" in the occupation over several decades, and the "very high percentage of women" among those attaining PR degrees "had no significant impact on the number of women actively employed in *senior* and *leading* positions". This indicates "tension between professionalisation and feminisation" that supports "the reproduction of gender hierarchies" (Fitch and Third 2010, p.7). Moreover, we argue it reflects the liberal feminist perspective evident in PR practice (Grunig, et al., 2001) that plays an active role in maintaining "individualism and the societal status quo" (Prilleltensky and Stead, 2013, p.22).

As a result, we doubt that role theory is a "robust framework for broadly explaining practitioner work patterns within the industry" (DeSanto, 2011, p.16). Its endurance (Clayton et al., 2021) reinforces outdated conceptualisation of management, leadership and careers. This is clear in calls, such as that by DeSanto (2011, p.16), for research into "how the function is really perceived by powerful elites and others within the organizational setting" in order for PR "to be recognized widely as a serious and important management function", rather than acknowledging how the world of work has been subject to change for more than three decades. Consequently, we are confident that the needs of a contemporary feminised PR profession are not met by attempts "to rationalise the hyper-complex cultural actuality" (Brown, 2011, p.91) through a hierarchical role theory that preferences the experiences of male PR executives from an earlier era (Broughton, 1943).

Part 2: A changing work landscape

The continuing emphasis on PR as a strategic management function, despite the gendering of the field (Fitch, 2015), has failed to acknowledge the fluidity outlined by Bowman and Hendy (2019) that has impacted the work landscape. We argue this reflects a shift from twentieth century (masculine) rigidity to twenty-first century (feminine) liquidity as shown at Table 1.

Field	Key Theme	Knowledge metaphor	Description of movement
Professions	Constructed, evolve, ephemeral	Capability	Movement away from defining a profession against strict criteria to looser frameworks including networks and communities. A body of knowledge with a focus on synthesising theoretical and practical concepts into a holistic integrated model rather than list-like generalisations. Concepts such as social legitimacy still relevant. Knowledge is an indicator of the value of a discipline and an individual's professional capability.
Careers	Multi-dimensional	Adaptability	Movement from linear career paths to careers that are multi-dimensional, kaleidoscopic and contribute to ephemeral professional identity. Individuals encounter mini-stages in careers, acquiring new skills and knowledge as the world becomes increasingly disruptive, uncertain and complex. Knowledge acquisition is a continuous process linked to adaptability of individuals and disciplines.
Competencies/Skills	Granular	Layered	Movement towards (i) greater granularity and differentiation between functional and theoretical knowledge and how this supports the notion of skills (competence) and behaviours (competencies), and (ii) ensuring this granularity supports the meta-competencies of continuous learning and flexibility. Knowledge, skills and behaviours are differentiated with layered competencies and knowledge frameworks.
Knowledge	Stratified	Dynamic	Movement from static to dynamic concepts of knowledge reflecting a shift from modernist to post-modernist perspectives. Embodies ideas around (i) tacit and explicit knowledge, recognising that knowledge comes in different forms, including through experience, and (ii) knowledge moves between tacit and explicit forms in a variety of ways, ensuring that knowledge is in perpetual motion. Knowledge is dynamic.
Leadership	Multiplicity	Humble	Movement away from a singular view of leadership (masculine, hierarchical, tendency for transmission approaches), to multi-ways of understanding and approaching leadership (feminine, inclusive, meaning centred, collaborative, empathetic). Humility is shown by leaders who seek out and accept the knowledge of others.

Table 1: The fluidity in the work landscape adapted from Bowman and Hendy (2019, pp. 336).

We recognise that fluidity in the work landscape challenges existing ideas about women and leadership. Specifically, movement in various fields has stimulated a necessary rethink of what professional identity and leadership now means.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is the “constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role” (Ibarra, 1999, pp.764-765). It is a signifier that an individual has unique abilities (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984), as professionals tend to be distinguished by what they do rather than organisations they work for (Pratt, et al., 2006). Importantly identity is modified and adapted during career transitions (Ibarra, 1999; Nicholson, 1984), while life itself shapes who we are and has an impact on our professional self (Schein, 1978).

Digital disruption and globalisation are transforming the nature of work (Lo Presti, 2009) as organisations respond to environmental turbulence and discontinuous change (Malhotra, 2002). Revell and Bryan (2018) talk of liquid professionalism where agency and engagement with a professional body of knowledge are unstable, creating a constant need to re-invigorate capabilities in fluid and changing times. This builds on Bauman’s (2000, p.181) views of liquid modernity characterised by random connections, unpredictability and change; it is the “unholy trinity” of uncertainty, insecurity and unsafety. Scholars such as Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) suggest the notion of what constitutes professional identity is changing and point to importance in contemporary careers of liminal experiences.

Traditionally, successful careers have required a clear professional identity construction (Arthur et al., 1999; Hall et al., 2002). Others argue a rise in corporate professionalism has resulted in closer association between organisational reputation and individual professional identity (Kipping et al., 2006). From a global organisational perspective, Abbott et al. (2014) talk of individuals needing to exhibit cultural hybridity (cultural amalgamation and integration of multiple cultures into the organisation) and identity multiplicity (individuals must navigate multiple perspectives, knowledge repertoires and norms).

Baruch (2004) observes that careers are changing and are now spiral and multi-dimensional or kaleidoscopic (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005, 2006), rather than linear and hierarchical. Reflecting on these changes Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) argue liminality is the hallmark of an increasingly precarious and fluctuating career landscape. Although liminality has always existed in careers, it has become increasingly messy and less controlled, associated with an uncoupling of roles and open-ended time periods, for example due to the growth of project work and consultancy roles. Careers are increasingly self-crafted with less dependency on the organisation. Such ways of looking at liminality reveal new opportunities that involve acceptance of identity change, growth, and self-reflection. We support the call of Reed and Thomas (2019) for PR practitioners be ‘liminar’ in constructing professional identity. We also embrace the idea of a liminality competency (Borg and Soderlund, 2015) that welcomes ambiguity, uncertainty and diffused role boundaries. Taken together, we argue changes in the career landscape point to a redefinition that moves beyond the normative hierarchical ladder metaphor.

As part of the liminal condition, a different relationship to knowledge and professional development is required. For this we adopt the ecological concept of a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1988). This acknowledges difference and heterogeneity, multiplicity, diverse and diffuse relations, linkages, mutations, evolving processes, and movement. Moreover, as part of this complex ecosystem, individuals (and their professional identities) are always ‘becoming’. Likewise, a body of knowledge

cannot be static, certain, and vertical (top-down). Instead, knowledge must be rhizomatic: adaptable, spreading in all directions, and constantly re-invigorated to cope with chaos and complexity. In such a world, professional development needs to be sustainable, with learning that is lifelong, life wide and life deep (Walters, 2010). This links to Heidegger's (1998) phenomenology that stresses the concept of 'being-in-the-world', emphasising we are not simply contained, we are embedded in and entwined within the world and, we argue, our own professional lifeworld.

Professional success in this entangled environment will be radically different. Already careers are rarely experienced as "a succession of related hierarchical jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence" (Wilensky, 1961, p.523). Our position is to contrast this aboreal (tree-like) thinking with rhizomatic systems that Hertz (2005, p.3) observes "parallel the structure of intelligence itself, a structure non-linear, multiplicitous, heterogeneous, nomadic, anarchic, and deterritorialized". Consequently, we contend that PR practice needs to be guided by a new rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development to tackle the array of unknown unknowns that practitioners encounter.

Leadership

Just as professional identity is changing so we argue is what constitutes leadership. While Alvesson and Spicer (2012, p.369) say "there is notoriously little agreement about how exactly we might define leadership", Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2018) identify two common themes: efforts to influence others and the ability to transform organisations. The meaning of these themes is contested depending on philosophical starting points. Taking a functionalist perspective, leadership is viewed through the lens of traits, values, competencies and the situations in which leadership takes place. This suggests it is possible to identify a 'distinct, coherent essence of leadership' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012, p. 371). Within this functionalist tradition, leadership has historically and culturally been associated with masculinity (Duo Billing and Alvesson, 2000). The normative perspective contrasts feminine leadership with the masculine (Pullen and Vachhani, 2020); typecasting women as 'other'. Traits and values that are associated with feminine leadership (empathy, collaboration, meaning making and an ethics of care) stereotype women as lacking masculine rationality (Fletcher, 2004). Instead, we argue feminine leadership should not be compared to the masculine. Rather, this style of leadership is gender neutral.

Turning to interpretivism, leadership is constructed within a social environment. Although communication aspects of leadership are less well researched (Bryman et al., 2011), scholars such as Fairhurst (2001) stress the role of discursive leadership in modern organisations. Fairhurst (2001) says this is enacted in communication processes and reflects two approaches: transmission of information that is linear and hierarchical, or the formation of meaning that is more dialogic. The former, in our view, reflects masculine approaches to leadership. It is the importance being placed on discursive approaches as well as on communicative leadership (Johansson et al., 2014), that we argue resonate with feminine leadership approaches.

A third perspective comes from the critical tradition that focuses on patterns of power and domination associated with leadership. Although aligned with feminist scholarship that argues leadership supports and legitimises male domination, the critical view tends to look at leadership as a process of social

construction and negotiation (Alvesson and Duo Billing, 2009). This emphasises power structures and situates leadership within notions of hierarchy.

While not sitting within a neat philosophical tradition, there are two further perspectives worth exploring. Firstly, leadership as a language game (Kelly 2008). This focuses on how language is used to understand acts of leadership and what constitutes an ideal leader (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Ford et al., 2008). The latter conjures up a dominant discourse that frames leadership (rather than management) as exciting, contributing to myths about the heroic and morally superior person (Alvesson, 2010). Regardless of gender, this framing reinforces exclusivity, as well as masculine traits.

The second perspective alters the understanding of leadership completely, pointing to upward leadership, peer leadership, and self-leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012, pp.18-19). This shifts leadership towards entrepreneurial notions (McGrath and MacMillan, 2000; Roebuck, 2011). In rapidly changing environments, leaders need to deliver organisational change and solve complex organisational and societal issues. This can be achieved in many ways and we point to a future that embraces various forms of 'hybrid' leadership (Groon, 2009).

This discussion of professional identity and leadership has revealed emerging and multi-dimensional interpretations. It highlights the need for re-evaluation of how women and leadership are conceptualised in public relations and communication practice.

Part 3: An ecological, radical feminine lens

It is our contention that the gendered PR industry has not recognised changes in professional identity and leadership within wider scholarship and contemporary society. Moreover, we observe that a liberal feminist, functional perspective within PR scholarship (Grunig et al., 2001) has played an active role in maintaining "individualism and the societal status quo" (Prilleltensky and Stead, 2013, p.22). Consequently, we address this limitation by adopting a radical feminism orientation and the concept of ecology that Williams (2006) argues is a 'thick concept' that has value in many fields.

Feminine not feminist

Rather than focusing on liberal feminist viewpoints, our starting point is that of radical feminism. Here there is a need to challenge and change patriarchal systems that oppress women and devalue women's difference (Rakow and Nastasia, 2018). This means PR should not be built around notional masculine values and fixed hierarchical workplace structures that offer a narrow definition of what successful PR careers looks like. We agree with how Topic et al. (2020) point to consistent discrimination and prejudice against women in PR. They advocate examining the position of women in PR through radical lenses, drawing in analysis of wider social structures and trends that explore the importance of difference. It is our position that women in PR have tended to accept masculine notions of success (Yaxley 2013). For instance, although Yeomans and Mariutti (2016) report persistent inequalities in the UK context, they find female PR practitioners propose solutions primarily at an individual rather than at a system level.

We argue it is the system – and its normative preference for *masculine* leadership – that is unacceptable, unsustainable and needs to change. Consequently, we challenge PR to embrace *feminine* collaboration and meaning-making in order to re-define what constitutes PR leadership and

success. However, we do not define leadership as masculine or feminine in gendered terms, as this is reductive and prone to stereotyping (Duo Billing and Alvesson, 2000). Instead, while we draw on radical feminism as a ‘call to action’ to reform the current patriarchal way in which PR operates, we pivot towards use of the word feminine that reflects a constructed gender-neutral notion of skills, behaviours and processes (Duo Billing and Alvesson, 2000). Further, we believe a new radical feminine perspective supports PR as a twenty-first century ‘liquid-modern’ practice that is strengthened by inclusivity with opportunities for the many, not just a few.

Taking an eco-turn

To weave various strands of our thinking together, we turned to ecology, described by Barnett (2011) as relating people to the world. This recognises the world’s interconnectedness, interdependencies and how it is sustained or injured by humanity. An ethical dimension underlines human responsibility to, and enmeshed existence with, the ecological system. Embedding an ecological underpinning as a bedrock of PR enables it to be situated as a dynamic, interconnected, and responsible practice that necessitates feminine values of collaboration, cooperation, and ethical reflection on which to ground success; in contrast to how success is traditionally understood.

Drawing attention to women’s role in saving the planet from the destructive consequences of the ‘male system’, d’Eaubonne (1974) originated the term ecofeminism. While this incorporates diverse views, ideas, theories and authors, Mihailov and Sakelarieva (2013) point to two consistent themes: the dynamic nature of relationships and interconnectedness, as well as responsibility and ethics. We believe this reflects the idea of ‘deep ecology’ (Naess, 1973), which embraces layers of interconnectedness and entanglement than amplify the liminal condition. Guattari (2005) talks of three ecologies of the mind, society, and the environment with the need for these to be articulated and discussed within an *ecosophy*, or ‘wise way’ of being. Such an *ecosophical* approach is mindful of the relational environments of human existence (Plumwood, 1993). Barnett (2011, p.33) draws on ecology and ecosophy to suggest five ‘registers’ of professional life that are relevant for understanding modern professionalism and we suggest are important for our re-imagining of PR practice:

1. **The ecology of the professional self.** We suggest this concerns the multiplicity of divergent demands that need to be reconciled given the increasing complexity of professional identity that points to growth and re-growth.
2. **The ecology of client relationships.** We believe this relates to all professional relationships that require duty, allegiance, and trust, and sometimes involve conflict and dissonance.
3. **The knowledge ecology of professionalism.** We use the term rhizomatic to reflect the tangled heterogeneity of practical, theoretical and discursive knowledge, the need to negotiate old and new knowledge, and liminality in understanding how knowledge is created and used.
4. **The ecology of the professional environment.** We point to the interconnectedness of complex networks and ecosystems in which professionals and organisations operate.
5. **The discursive ecology of professionalism.** We call for a new conceptualisation of practice that engages with a broader range of domains, as well as the tensions and interconnectedness of these.

In summary, we present an ecological, radical and feminine lens as visualised in Figure 1. This model makes visible the form of a mandorla that emerges when feminine and masculine constructs are brought together. The mandorla is a fitting image, as its almond-shaped frame (or aureola) is associated with the 'feminine', for obvious symbolic reasons.

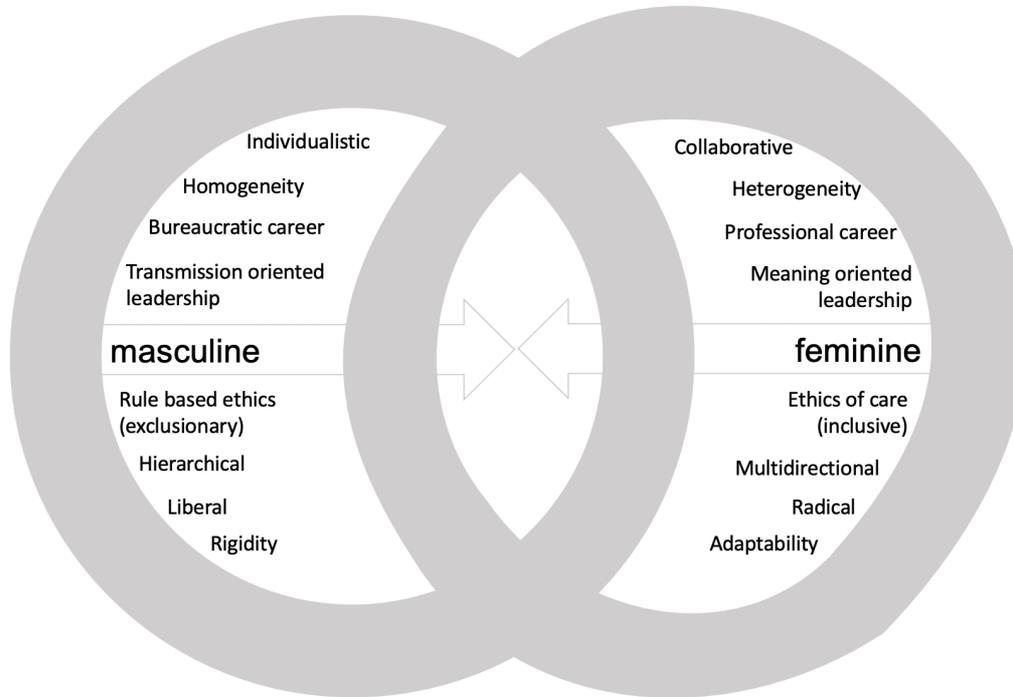


Figure 1: The mandorla model: an ecological, radical, feminine lens.

In crafting this figure, we represent the masculine with a solid circle, and offer a more natural 'riparian' shape for the feminine. Riparian signifies the riverbank, which we conceive as an interspace that is meandering and always evolving. Considering concepts evident throughout this chapter, we juxtapose the feminine and masculine. In doing so, we allow established and emerging notions of professional identity and leadership to create a liminal, ecosophical reflective space, that is typified by the mandorla.

Part 4: A re-imagined PR and communications practice: a rhizomatic typology of both knowledge and professional development

By disrupting the 'taken-for-granted' patriarchal perspective, the mandorla model amplifies ethical considerations, reflection, attributes of care, collaboration and meaning-making. In doing so, we place PR practice within an entire ecosystem in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1988), Heidegger (1998) and Bauman (2000), something we suggest has not been fully explored previously.

The mandorla (our ecological radical feminine lens) envisions a re-imagining of PR and communication practice in which professional identity and leadership are valued in terms of "feminine ontologies, ways of knowing" (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015, p.88). Consequently, we propose a new rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development to realise an ecosophy of PR based on sensibilities of a wise society, as outlined in Table 2.

Mandorla model: an ecological, radical and feminine lens		
A rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development interconnecting:		
<p>Operations: knowledge contributing to organisational goals.</p>	<p>Professional accountability: knowledge contributing to individual and professional performance monitoring and improvement.</p>	<p>Society: knowledge contributing to engagement, relationships and legitimacy.</p>
Ecosophy of PR: Sensibilities of a wise society		
<p>1.Sensibility of Growth embodies a process of continual ‘becoming’ through the commitment to lifelong, life wide and life deep learning that is necessary for an equitable practice and liquid world.</p> <hr/>		
<p>2.Sensibility of Goodness relates to how professional and societal relationships spark and settle ethical paradoxes in a messy and complex world.</p> <hr/>		
<p>3.Sensibility of Sustainability reflects the need to negotiate, create and use the tangled heterogeneity of practical, theoretical, and discursive knowledge in a liminal world.</p> <hr/>		
<p>4.Sensibility of Well-being points to the interconnectedness of complex networks and ecosystems in which professionals and organisations can better support people, prosperity, peace, partnership, and the planet (UN Sustainability Development Goals, 2015).</p> <hr/>		
<p>5.Sensibility of Humility encourages an open and questioning mindset, curiosity, emotional and social intelligence, respect for others, and willingness to acknowledge what you don’t know in an increasingly interconnected and multifaceted world.</p>		

Table 2: Ecosophy of PR: realising a wise society through a rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development.

Born of ecological understanding and insight, our ecosophy of PR presents the practice as a ‘wise society’ (Sahtouris, 2014). It is underlaid by reflection on the relationship and entanglement between the mind, social and environmental ecologies of our world. According to Panikkar (2010), ecosophy concerns wisdom of the earth and indicates an open feminine attitude. Moreover, while wisdom involves experience, knowledge and good judgement, ecosophy “has to do with our sensitivities as much as our intellection” (Panikkar, 2010, p.355). We build on Panikkar’s use of sensitivities by developing five ‘sensibilities’ that we argue fall out of the ecosophical discussions of Guattari (2005) and Barnett (2011), and from wider workplace scholarship.

Although the concept of sensibilities is complex and evolving (Wickberg, 2007), we have chosen it deliberately to reflect a relationship with acute perception, responsiveness and ‘dispositions’, the

foundational way an individual understands who they are (Schussler and Knarr, 2013). In addition, sensibilities exist within moral foundation theory (Graham et al., 2009), whereby people group their moral concerns or preferences around six areas: care, fairness, loyalty, respect, purity, and liberty. Consequently, we consider the concept of sensibilities to be well suited to achieving an ecosophy that re-imagines PR and communication management as an ethically reflective feminine practice. Through our mandorla lens, we glimpse the destination of the 'wise society' that can only be realised by connecting knowledge to our five sensibilities through professional development.

Conclusion

This chapter has challenged existing ideas about women and leadership in PR and communication management. We have established that the potential to create a thriving contemporary feminised PR profession has been frustrated by a reluctance to move beyond twentieth century masculine notions of management, leadership, careers, and success. This penalises women's investment in professional development and inhibits maturing of the practice by favouring androcentric career assumptions that "devalue the feminine" (Marshall 1989, p.282).

Our discussion of professional identity and leadership revealed that liminality, uncertainty, and fluidity are the hallmarks of an increasingly precarious and fluctuating career landscape. We demonstrated that professional success in this entangled environment will be radically different. Identity in the twenty-first century must be adaptive, creating a constant need to re-invigorate professional capabilities. In terms of leadership, this is no longer viewed simply as a hierarchical role. Rather, in an age of complexity, meaning-making and collaboration, a more feminine style of leadership (that we present as gender-neutral), is more desirable. In relation to women and leadership in PR, a practice of feminine leaders would celebrate the ecology and liminality of their networked organisational and professional lives.

Rejecting liberal feminist viewpoints that support the status quo, we linked aspects of radical feminism and ecological thinking. Juxtaposing feminine and masculine constructs, we allowed established and emerging notions of professional identity and leadership to create a liminal, reflective space. Looking through this mandorla-shaped lens, we spy an ecosophy of PR based on sensibilities of a wise society.

Ultimately, we have established the value of an ecological radical feminine perspective of women and leadership in PR and communication management. This supports a rhizomatic typology of knowledge and professional development and embraces feminine sensibilities of growth, goodness, sustainability, well-being, and humility as an ecosophy of PR practice.

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