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# **Looking Through Different Lenses: Women's Feminist Perspectives in Public Relations**

## **Mirando por de Lentes Diferentes: Perspectivas Feministas de las Mujeres en Relaciones Públicas**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Women dominate the public relations field, yet despite a female majority in public relations, survey findings by professional associations in the UK highlight persistent inequalities, predominantly in pay. In response to these findings, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in the United Kingdom "is developing a diversity strategy which not only recognizes that a gender gap in Public Relations exists but that practical actions can be taken to address these issues" (CIPR, 2014). Additionally, when linked to this evidence, Yeomans (2013) believes that cultural and social factors are deep-rooted and complex regarding the feminist aspect of Public Relations professionals' career experiences.

Feminist social theory has provided a classification scheme for analysing and interpreting the perspectives about women professionals' roles and positions in the Public Relations field. Both liberal and radical feminist theories based on feminist social studies (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, p.255) are seen in Public Relations' roles and positions in the workplace; in the public and private sectors, corporate and academic environments.

Radical feminism explicitly emphasizes the difference between women and men, promoting the basis for many of the ideas of feminism. Usually, radical feminists want to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that society has imposed upon them. On the other hand, according to Yeomans (2014), "Liberal feminism supports the doctrine of individualism, which advocates that all men and women are rational individuals who are capable of competing for jobs on an equal footing, assuming that the correct adjustments are made to social structures and gender roles."

Accordingly, due to the inequalities in the current situation in the United Kingdom, based in the literature and professional associations' statistics, this paper poses the following

research question: 'Which feminist perspectives do professionals consider about women in PR?'

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review is structured into three sections. The first one briefly introduces the current situation in the United States of America and the United Kingdom regarding Public Relations and inequalities in the professional arena; in addition, it presents the statistical figures and existing *status quo* in the Public Relations field. The second and third sections review the two main feminist theories chosen for this paper's analysis, which are the liberal feminism and the radical feminism concepts, based on Rakow and Nastasia's classifications (2009).

### **2.1. Public Relations and Gender Inequalities: The Current Situation**

Several researchers' and organizations' statistics reveal the current situation of female professionals in Public Relations. One of the most important issues is the gender pay-gap: in late 2007 the Public Relations Society of America's research revealed that men reported average annual salaries of \$93,494 while women reported \$66,467 (Ragan's PR Daily, 2011). Additionally, Tsetsura (2014, p.99) underlined that for entry-level and mid-level positions female practitioners are seen as "cheap labour". Different factors may cause this pay-gap. Dozier et al. provide different perspectives to this topic; the gender pay-gap arises because women work in lower paying specialisations, tend to have fewer years of professional experience, and are more likely to have income-suppressing career interruptions (Dozier et al., 2012, p. 12). A study by Krider and Ross provide convenient support to those ideas and the "roles and career"-clash: "As stated by one participant: with men it is okay to put your career first... women are always struggling." (Krider and Ross, 1997, p.448). At this point it is important to address the article of Daymon and Surma (2012, p.186-190) to understand how women negotiate life-career conflict and how this situation affects their identity. Their research identified three categories of identity: segmented, blurred and merged. In

segmented identity, there are significant and defined boundaries between professional and non-work spheres (2012, p.186). Blurred identity is formed by fuzzy boundaries, in this type of identity professional and non-work spheres are separated but in some situations they can be overlapped (2012, p.187). In merged identity professional and non-work spheres are integrated; boundaries are dissolved willingly or reluctantly (2012, p.189).

Recently, Place's (2015) qualitative research, which responds to feminists' call for gender to be explored in a more holistic way, has used intersectionality theory and focused on the following question: How do women public relations practitioners define gender?

She found out that women public relations professionals applied multiple definitions to articulate their experiences regarding gender in the workplace. Precisely, the participants defined gender as (a) a binary, biological construct (b) a social construct, and (c) a phenomenon linked to age, race, and ethnicity. Her study showed how women public relations practitioners define, perceive, and experience gender in the workplace illustrated how participants used multiple conflicting definitions, stereotypes, and assumptions regarding sex and gender. Place (2015, p.73) states that, "Gender represents a complex process of social and cultural interactions shaped by one's race, ethnicity, sexuality, and age".

According to the European Communication Monitor 2014 (Tench, Vercic, Verhoeven and Moreno, 2014), men reported 68.6% overall satisfaction with their job while women reported 65.2%. In addition, it is revealed that female communicators have been less involved in mentoring: 40.7 percent of the respondents stated that female communication professionals need more time for private obligations (Zerfass et al., 2014). A further study, which consists of secondary analysis of European Communication Monitor data shows that male PR professionals perceive themselves as being taken more seriously by senior management in their organization than female professions perceive themselves (Verhoeven and Aarts, 2010, p.7).

According to the *PRWeek*/PRCA Census 2013 report, the United Kingdom Public Relations industry contributed between 7.5 billion pounds and 9.62 billion pounds to the economy in 2011 and 2013. Sixty-one thousand, six hundred individuals were employed in the sector in 2011 and 62,000 in 2013 (PRCA, 2013). A key issue is the majority of women working in public relations roles: as highlighted by Yeomans (2014), public relations is a female-

dominated profession, with up to 70 per cent of the profession numerically feminised in some European countries and 64 per cent in the UK (CIPR, 2015). Although the *State of the Profession* survey (CIPR, 2015) found that the percentage of women at senior level in the PR industry is 48% (board level representation was not identified within the research), it also found that a clear pay inequality gap of £8,483 exists in favour of men - a figure that cannot be explained by any other factor such as length of service, seniority, parenthood, or a higher prevalence of part-time work amongst women. This leads to the need of research in order to understand and to tackle these significant gender problems in the public relations field, such as position opportunities, roles, and pay-gap.

## **2.2. Liberal Feminism**

The most common and the most reasonably argued form of feminism, which is based on the first wave that gained the women's suffrage, is said to be the liberal feminism (Chrisler and McHough, 2011, p. 40; Vincent, 2009, p. 170-173). It is based on liberal theory and uses individualism as a doctrine (Groenhut, 2002, p. 55-57; Yeomans, 2014). The primary goal of this theoretical approach is to gain equality for women by increasing their social and political participation, achieving freedom for every woman, and considering them as full individuals (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, p. 254; Vincent, 2009, p. 194). Moreover, they strive to minimize the gender system (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, p. 255-256). Although liberal feminists are struggling for the obliteration of discrimination, they do not bring the "underlying social institutions" or restructuring of the system into question (Grunig et al., 2011, p. 321; Jagger and Rothenberg, 1984, cited in Chrisler and McHough, 2011, p. 48; Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, p. 254-256). Another main thought is that equal opportunities for women can be gained through "education and the elimination of prejudice and discrimination" as well as through representative democracy and the possibility of rational legal reform (Chrisler and McHough, 2011, p. 48; Vincent 2009, p. 173). They recognize the male domination as "unjustified male monopoly" which hinders women to become equal. As solutions, they see economic and individual freedom because "free markets imply free individuals, including women, who can compete on equal terms" (Vincent, 2009, p. 173-174). Transferred to Public Relations liberal feminism advocates "for ensuring that women be able to compete with men for comparable

jobs with comparable salaries” (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, p. 256) Based on this, liberal feminism is tightly connected to the theory of empowerment, especially self-empowerment.

According to Novek, feminism “has long emphasized the special enabling qualities of connectedness for women,” (Novek, 1991, p. 2). Empowerment may be seen as “the capacity to exert control and influence over decisions that affects one’s life space for one’s own benefit” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 44), which totally fits the worldview of liberal feminists. The transition from a passive powerlessness to an active control over one’s life is closely related to the liberal feminist idea of the imperative of freedom, equality, and equal rights. “Tools” for empowering may be networking, mentoring, or role modelling other women (Grunig et al., 2011, p. 331). Liberal feminist strategies suggest that women should adopt “masculine” behaviour in order to gain success in a male-dominated work environment (Grunig et al. 2001, p. 312). Another liberal feminist strategy found by different scholars is the denying of the existence of discrimination (Grunig et al., 2001, p. 324-325; Wrigley, 2002). Brenda Wrigley describes this phenomenon, which she calls “negotiated resignation”, in her in-depth study as disowning of discrimination such as the glass ceiling. She considers this a survival strategy as well as the denial of patriarchy (Grunig et al., 2001, p. 324-325).

### **2.3. Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism, which appeared in the late 1960s, is mainly in conflict with the principles of liberal feminism (Bryson, 2003, p. 163-164; Enns, 1997). The reason for this clash between the two different feminist perspectives is that radical feminism suggests an essential change in society to diffuse patriarchy. Pointing out the difference of women from men, radical feminists construct groups ejecting males totally (Chrisler and McHough, 2011, p. 41). Radical feminism emphasizes the significance of personal feelings, experiences and relationships. What radical feminism opposes is patriarchy, the male dominated system itself, not men. The aim of radical feminism is to object, to combat and to eradicate patriarchy by countering typical gender roles and oppression of women and necessitate a radical reshaping of society. It is believed by radical feminists that the domination of women is the most ancient, inferior and unacceptable kind of domination in the world (Bryson, 2003, p. 163). This is based on the idea of dominating women of different classes, cultures, and races (Bryson, 2003, p. 166; Vincent 2009, p. 177).

Judith Lorber says, “Radical feminism's theoretical watchword is *patriarchy*, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever women and men are in contact with each other, in private as well as in public.” As Lorber (1997) suggests male supremacy is visible, everywhere and women are exposed to this domination. Male domination and gender inequality can be combated “by forming non-hierarchical, supportive, woman-only spaces where women can think and act and create free of constant sexist put-downs” (Lorber, 1997, p. 16-17).

In contrast to liberal feminists, who focus on solutions at the individual level, radical feminism calls for change in the 'system' itself with the main goal of a new form of organization” (Grunig et al., 2001, p. 334). Women should not accommodate to the male status quo. A first step in a radical strategy is the awareness of gender inequality and the environmental structure, which encourages this. Another further step could be a change in the law system, e.g. the opportunity for maternity or general family leave or against sexual harassment (Grunig et al., 2001, p. 335-336). Another focus of feminist strategies with radical intent is the change of gender roles and therefore the way girls and boys “enjoy” gender-specific education. The strategies also include an organizational reform of the sphere of work and labour, with more room for lifelong learning etc. (Grunig et al., 2001, p. 340-345).

Grunig et al. (2000) suggest that research to identify feminist values needs to focus on the professionals' understanding of gender. They note that there should be research focussing on local PR firms as well (Grunig et al., 2000, p. 62). Subsequently Wrigley shows that a denial of the glass ceiling and of the lack of equal pay for men and women is a common strategy among female PR practitioners. Furthermore, she notes that – mainly young – women in PR feel discomfort with feminism (Wrigley, 2002). Yeomans points out that consultants are “skilled in negotiating different identities, through specific relational performances” (2013, p. 30). Her results also show that the professionalization in PR also forces a masculine culture in PR firms (Yeomans, 2013, p. 30). Based on the theoretical implications and empirical findings outlined above, the research question investigated in this paper is: *Which feminist perspectives do professionals consider about women in PR?*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper was developed according to a qualitative research approach, described by Hair, Wolfenbarger, Ortinau, and Bush (2007) and by Flick (2009). For Flick (2009, p.20), qualitative research is appropriate regarding the relevance of the social relations studied is due to the pluralisation of life spheres, in the case of this paper this means advances in the linkage role of the professional and the profession status quo's challenges.

Both primary and secondary data were considered in this study in order to enrich the results' analysis and supplement the reflexivity of the topic. Therefore, these data may provide valuable and current insights into understanding the PR female practitioners' feminist perspectives in their positions and career journey. Accordingly, for secondary data collection, the authors have researched PR and communications associations, papers, reviews, and notes from the discussions and insights during the Women in Public Relations in Europe 2014 programme.

In order to collect primary data, the authors conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews during four days in the month of July 2014 in the city of Leeds, United Kingdom. Prior to collecting primary data, ethical authorization was obtained using the consent form suggested by Leeds Beckett University research support office and signed by each participant. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with professionals working in the real corporate environment. Therefore, this paper was mainly based on four knowledgeable female British Public Relations professionals from different jobs' positions and sectors based in Leeds, United Kingdom.

After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the transcripts' interpretation and classification were examined using analysis of the narratives and the reflexivity research approaches. Data analysis models described by Polkinghorne (1995), Schön (1984) and Flick (2009) were mostly chosen in this paper. Narrative interview often "assumes that 'narrative expression' reflects both conscious concerns and relatively unconscious cultural, societal and individual processes," (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 216). Consequently, the stories and experiences were collected and analysed for their daily situations, key skills or story types associations in these professionals' life journey and current positions and roles. Regarding reflexivity, for Schön (1984) the process of reflection is an exhibition of tacit knowledge that derives from time, experience and knowledge of how to do a task.



In order to understand how radical or liberal feminist concepts influence or regulate the Public Relations profession, the participants' responses were analysed considering their own experiences in their career journey and current positions. Thus, each interview was analysed by the meaning and the content as thematic pattern categories in order to filter concepts, trends, or experiences. In the follow-up phase of the study, participants' responses were genuinely probed to assess the content of the collected data, the conceptual framework and the theoretical and practical alignment of the research question.

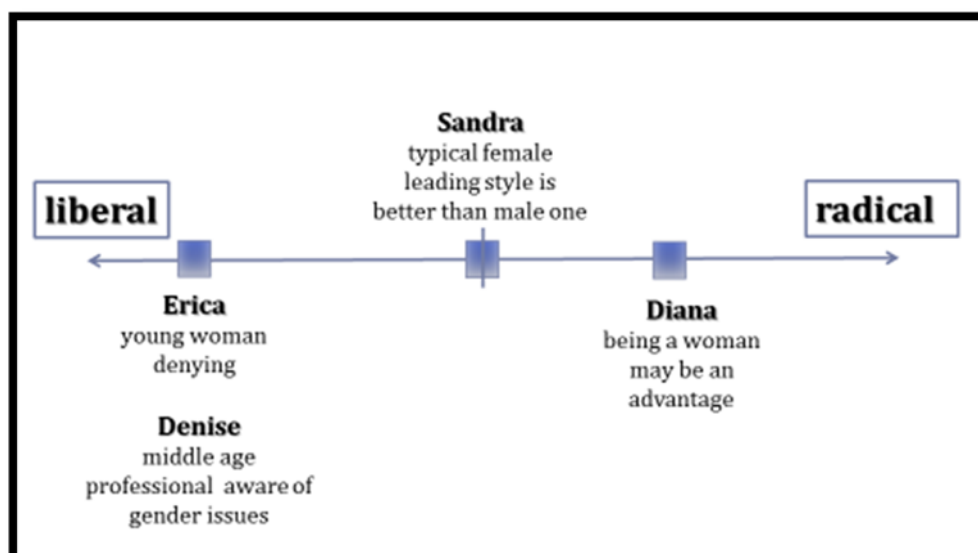
#### **4. FINDINGS**

As already mentioned in the method description, the research group interviewed four female PR practitioners. In this section, the authors' aim is look at the responses that emerged from these interviews.

Firstly, the findings after the analysis of the interviews are visually presented (Figure 1). Secondly, every interview participant is classified as having a perspective based on the literature review, then she is described by her most important tasks, characteristics and facts related to her working experiences; moreover, the specific theme of gender is clearly pointed out. For the last step, the connections are outlined and the theoretical perspectives are illustrated by classifying the interviewees' perspectives as liberal or radical feminist according to Rakow and Nastasia (2009).

Figure 1 exhibits the findings after the analysis of the interviews. All interviews were anonymised, so pseudonyms are used to protect confidentiality.

#### **Figure 1. Summary of the Findings**



The themes of liberal and radical feminism are seen throughout the data, as the description of each interview confirms next. Table 1 presents selected narratives from the interviewees.

**Table 1. Overview of the Interview Participants' Profiles**

Interviewee, PR Position and Feminism	Selected Narratives related to Feminist Perspectives
<p>Denise</p> <p>Executive position</p> <p><b>LIBERAL</b></p>	<p>"In the UK mostly people of PR tend to be women. Predominantly so. I'm not quite sure why. And in journalism there are more men, generally speaking"</p> <p>"If you look on a PR course it will be predominantly women at the university in the UK. And they will be predominantly attractive, well dressed, well-heeled women. And I think the industry thinks those are the people who can sell which is clearly nonsense".</p> <p>"I think it is perfectly easy for women to fulfil those expectations as decision makers. I think, historically it was said that the man is the decision maker at home and at work. But that is an out of date concept. That's not the case now. I think one of the issues is if you are a man making decisions you can seem to be strong and authoritative. As a woman you can be seen to be above your station".</p>
<p>Erica</p> <p>Account executive</p> <p><b>LIBERAL</b></p>	<p>"For me gender does not play a role for me. I don't think my gender really comes in within my position."</p> <p>"I don't think (name of female colleague)'s gender would have ever impacted her career. I think, people are not really judged by their gender."</p> <p>"I think that women can just be as powerful as men."</p> <p>"I think all my career I've been judged on my work, rather than me, so everything that I have done is me doing the work experience, when I was at university doing the university degree, going for the job. I think it's</p>

	<p>been, I don't think I've dealt with any discrimination whether it's positive or negative.”</p> <p>“I think we've all had careers where we've been able to progress our career in the way that we wanted it and our gender hasn't stopped it.”</p>
<p>Sandra</p> <p>Head of Communication and Marketing</p> <p><b>MIX of LIBERAL and RADICAL</b></p>	<p>“But for me it's all about the individual and how the individual is, and you can get excellent practitioners that are male and excellent practitioners that are female, and I personally think it's down to the individual really.”</p> <p>“But I think you can still look smart and professional in your own style.”</p> <p>“That's the way I personally like to operate. If that's a male or female thing I don't know. I don't know if it's just latterly that it's moved the other way, become more women ... Having said that, as an employer, it is rare to get a CV from a man. I've had a few. I wouldn't make any judgement based on gender.”</p>
<p>Diana</p> <p>Director of Marketing and Communications</p> <p><b>SEMI-RADICAL</b></p>	<p>“I didn't really think that my gender had much impacted my role, because I worked in a sector where females were very prevalent in PR.”</p> <p>“During the last year I've worked for a charity and I think I've never been more aware of my gender. I'm on a management team with four men and one other woman and they – they are properly old school – old-fashioned men, from privileged backgrounds, from boys' clubs. So I've been really aware of it and I've felt that I've had to fight more to get what I want. And so it kind of makes me act in a way that I don't like acting in – so I have to kind of argue and fight for things rather than work collaboratively, and I really struggle.”</p> <p>“And so I guess the perception is you look nice, and it's all kind of – style over substance. I think that is the perception of PR people.”</p> <p>“In PR you've very, very rarely got an absolute rule, so pretty much every minute of every day you're using your judgement and decision-making, so that's the key one.”</p> <p>“I think empathy's a really key one, and the combination of having a PR background and being a woman is a killer combination.”</p>

*Interview 1* shows the liberal perspective - Denise is a middle-aged woman, who holds a middle level executive position in an agency, which supports business in a region of England by doing PR work for the region. She has no real explanation why the rate of women in PR is so high in the UK. She just mentions that there are more females with jobs in waitressing or catering on the one hand, and on the other hand, more males with jobs, for example, as a bus driver. In the agency in which she is working, more men are employed. In her opinion, this is why she has engaged many journalists to the agency; these are mostly men due to the domination of men in journalism. Although she does not have an explanation for that, journalism is a typical working field for men, while PR is female dominated in the UK. Probed further, Denise mentions, that the fundamental assignment of PR is “selling something” and

people expect PR professionals to be well-dressed, young women. That is the stereotype of a person working in PR. In her eyes, the most important point for effectiveness in a leading position in PR is making decisions very quickly. For Denise, women have the best requirements to make difficult decisions and work fast, but she sees a historical cliché that people mainly accept decisions rather from a man than a woman - showing a liberal feminist inclination. In Denise's view working in PR is easier for women than in journalism.

Regarding *Interview 2* has also a liberal feminist perspective - Erica is a young woman who finished university about three years ago. Now she is working as Account Executive in a full service agency (marketing and PR) with many lifestyle and food clients. Her everyday work is not influence by gender issues. In her way of thinking, she and her colleagues are judged just by performance not by gender. Nevertheless, when she described her working situation before starting at this agency, she mentioned that her supervisor put her automatically in the fashion clients section, whereas the male colleagues were responsible for the more "male stuff" like market consumer based and B2B-clients. For her it was no big deal, because her personal interests are predominantly in the field of fashion and so she could connect private interests and work. She is denying that women or men use their appearance in work, but tries to wear clothes where she comes across professionally. According to her, female PR practitioners may sometimes have a better relationship to clients. Talking about her female supervisor at the agency she is now working in, she is sure that gender issues never influenced the career of this colleague. For Erica the most important point in a leading position is confidence and you are not allowed to have weaknesses. Asked about that issue, she confirmed that women in leading positions take on masculine characteristics. On the other hand, she mentioned that women are not changing completely by rising to a leading position. Yet she has had no negative experiences with male colleagues in her working life. Therefore, she emphasized, that everybody has the same chances in every industry to get a job.

*Interview 3* presents a mixed of radical and liberal perspectives but also showing gender-neutrality - Sandra is head of communication and marketing in a charity organization, which operates nationally, in the UK. She is about 40 years old. In contrast to the other interviewees, she talks about the gender issue from another perspective: in the team she is leading, there is only one man and she would wish to have more balance (so more men) in there. She likes to have different and diverse perspectives on a topic and therefore she says a

diverse team is a good base. Sandra does not feel confronted with gender problems, because she always looks at the personal characteristics of her team members no matter if male or female. However, her narrative states that she believes excellent practitioners can be either male or female. Nevertheless, she differentiates between a female style of leading a team (quite inclusive, co-operative, described as nurturing), which is the way she is handling it, and a male style, which she describes as dominant. She has sometimes been criticized because of her “feminine style”. Asked about good leadership attitudes, Sandra describes it in a very different way than the other interviewed women: “You have to be quite calm, quite considered in your approach.” To have a vision is also another point for her. Those characteristics are identified as female ones by her. She has the opinion that women can be so successful in PR, because of having those characteristics. They are important for doing a great job in this field. Looking back in time, Sandra mentioned that when she was in university, gender issues were not discussed. The discussion arose after her student days.

*Interview 4* has a semi-radical perspective - Diana is director of marketing and communications in an agency, which is responsible for raising the profile of a medium city in the UK. Therefore, she works in the same kind of tourism sector as Denise does. Diana has about twenty years working experience. In her narrative, she suggests a problem with the image of PR professionals regarding being dressed up nicely and looking smart but with no ‘substance’. Regarding her position, since she is in a leading position, she has not noticed that gender influences her work. However, after becoming a senior manager, she experienced problems according to her gender and her very young looking appearance. Since working in the charity sector for a year and in her opinion, she has *never been more aware of her gender*. She works in a team with very “old-fashioned” men and she feels like she has to fight more for things; she highlights “As long as you stay in your technical PR role, it is ok for men, but if you want to enter their world, it’s a different matter and it is like ‘Get back to your place!’”. Similar to Sandra, she also shows that she has to negotiate ambiguous situations in this role. Related to leadership roles men and women are both capable of them, but men have more confidence in their ability to do those things. Women are often not sure about their abilities. Diana thinks that women have an advantage in working in PR: “I think empathy’s a really key one, and the combination of having a PR background and being a woman is a killer combination.”

## 5. DISCUSSION

Overall, these narratives indicate that there is need for comparing and discussing feminist perspectives in relation to the experiences of women in PR; as they were the main issues the interviewees focused upon during the interviews – personal situations and daily involvements being touched by their performance and roles.

Regarding the discovery of gender issues, three of the four interviewed practitioners have described gender as a relevant aspect in their everyday work. While Denise does not describe this fact in either a positive or a negative way, Diana and Sandra consider it as a problem. Both women stated that they first noticed this issue when they entered higher positions in their PR career. This suggests that as long as women stay in their technical role of PR work, they are not confronted with questions of gender. Male colleagues apparently start to perceive them as competitors when women hit the glass ceiling and the issue of gender therefore becomes visible. Surprisingly our findings are contradictory to Wrigley (2002), who pointed out that denial of gender issues is a common strategy or to Grunig et al. (2001) regarding the denying of the existence of discrimination.

Only the youngest interviewed person, Erica, reported no gender influence. However, by considering her former working experience, gender specific treatment can be drawn from her narrative. So although the authors accept her experiences and her interpretation, the fact that she did not realize this treatment as a special gender issue can be seen as denying of the real situation. The authors infer that Erica's attitude may result from her age and her lack of experience, and possibly a discomfort with feminism (Wrigley, 2002). This also supports the results of Diana's and Sandra's statements, which stated that gender becomes an issue when reaching the glass ceiling (see Wrigley, 2002, p. 49).

How the two feminist perspectives – liberal and radical and their moderations – are revealed in these narratives can be seen next. Overall, these four narratives delivered significant gender issues interpretation classifying Denise and Erika as liberal, Diana as semi-radical and Sandra as mixed between liberal and radical feminism perspectives.

According to Denise's liberal feminism perspective, she is aware but not sure of the reason that there are more women as public relations professionals in the UK than men. Denise describes that, in the past, mainly men would be the decision maker at home and work, however nowadays women can fulfil expectations as decision makers as men relating to compete on equal terms as stated by Vincent (2009). The only problem she mentioned was the time when she was a "working mum" (mother) without going into detail. Her description about a man and a woman being strong and authoritative in making decisions can have different interpretations as stated by Grunig et al. (2001), because women need to use "masculine" behaviour to succeed.

Erica's liberal feminist perspective can be interpreted as liberal for different reasons. She often repeated the fact that there is no gender issue and that everybody is judged by his or her performance (Vincent, 2009) and denial as a survival strategy by Grunig et al. (2001). Furthermore, confidence, which is one of the mentioned strategies for self-empowerment, is a very important requirement for being successful in her point of view (Novek, 1991), affirming that women can be as powerful as man can. Another interpretation from her words is about a certain discomfort with feminism (Wrigley, 2002).

Sandra's perspectives can be identified as a mix of liberal and radical feminist, because she is aware of gender issues in their career (Grunig et al., 2001) and emphasizes the value of specific female qualities because for Sandra, being a woman may be an advantage. Sandra goes one step further and considers the typical feminine leadership style as superior to the male leadership style as demarcated by Bryson (2003) and Vincent (2009). Another factor, which shows the radical feminist perspective, is that Diana had the feeling that she has to fight more since she entered a higher position and Diana described her problems in establishing her female style of leading (Vincent, 2009).

Diana's perspective can be classified as semi-radical feminist because from Diana's narrative, she recognises that gender becomes an issue (Grunig et al., 2001) when reaching the glass ceiling (Wrigley, 2002). In addition to these interpretations, she has experienced struggles as a female manager when she has worked with a male team, not in her preferred collaborative way, but with her need to adopt an argumentative style – aligned to Lorber's

(1997) suggestion that male authority is noticeable when women are in leading positions. Diana also pointed out that empathy is a relevant characteristic of women in PR.

A comparison of the feminist perspective findings – two liberal, one mixed, and one radical feminism – reveals, none of the four interviewed women mentioned the term “feminism”, which fits the results of Wrigley (2002), that women try to deny this term. It also has to be added that none of them focused on changing the system as a whole. Even though two women - Sandra and Diana - were identified with radical feminist predispositions, they only suggested solutions on an individual level.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study focused on how the Public Relations profession is coded in accordance with the radical and liberal feminist approaches by Rakow and Nastasia (2009). Together these results provide important insights into the current phenomena regarding women in PR, in the UK context – as recommended by Grunig et al. (2000) about researching in order to identify feminist values focusing on professionals’ understanding of the gender issue. In addition to that, this paper endorses these researchers’ references and confirms that there are inequalities about the professional reality in the field as reported by USA and UK professional associations’ data.

The perspectives of the four professionals were categorized as the following: two as liberal perspective, one as mixed of liberal and radical feminism and one as radical perspectives. Although the authors classified the interviewees into two perspectives of feminism consistently, there is, however, a wide range of characteristics within those perspectives.

While the current study is predominantly based on a small sample of participants, the findings suggest that this topic is extremely appropriate; certainly, this current study confirms feminist issues are topical in PR, even though it is a modest research contribution to advance changes and shifts in the PR field across the world. Additionally, this paper provides reflections for not only the postgraduate students who have participated in the Erasmus



Intensive Programme, but also illuminations for future researchers and, professionals who will read it. As mentioned by Grunig et al. (2001, p. 360) "most feminist treatises end with the notion that the solution to sex discrimination hinders on political, institutional, and organisational policies", strongly focusing on the equality for women in PR.

Based on this myriad of possibilities to advance in this potential topic, further research should be done to investigate specific themes and others professionals' role, for instance, PR professionals from private and public sectors; international PR professionals from other countries; and PR men's perceptions. We argue that gender inequalities should be a part of PR education in university and this should include research about other feminist theory perspectives (Rakow and Nastasia 2009, p.255).

Fundamentally, women's feminist perspectives in Public Relations move forward and advance in research when looking through different lenses of both the theory and practice are aligned, compared, and connected.

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