

ASCILITE 2024

Navigating the Terrain:

Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies

Women Leading in the Third space: Leveraging LinkedIn to Build Professional Identity

Leanne Ngo

Latrobe University, Australia

Helmy Cook

Monash University, Australia

Simone Tyrell

Deakin University, Australia

Karine Cosgrove

Griffith University, Australia

Kranthi Addanki

James Cook University, Australia

As Third Space educators, we work at the "interface between professional and academic activity" (Whitchurch, 2013, p. 55). Career progression in the Third Space is less defined and structured compared to traditional academic progression. This lack of structure and definition, paired with women being more likely to move into Third Space roles, contributes to women being underrepresented in senior leadership roles in university settings (Denney, 2021). Being in this less understood space may also result in feelings of isolation and disconnect, particularly with the rise of remote work. This adds to the difficulties of staying abreast of the complexity of higher education, continuous evolution of technologies (generative AI), and diverse student needs. These factors demand that practitioners continually update their expertise and career profiles.

LinkedIn is a platform for professional networking, collaborative learning space for career development, and supports over one billion users with features such as LinkedIn Learning, versatile profiles, and AI-driven career advice (LinkedIn, 2024). For Third Space professionals, it provides valuable opportunities to network, share achievements, and build personal and professional brands (Loganathan, 2023; Rycraft, 2018). A LinkedIn profile is a valuable job seeking tool and requires meaningful interaction and engagement. Challenges in using this platform include experiencing anxiety and imposter syndrome, resulting from comparisons with others (Marder et al, 2023). Women are less likely to leverage LinkedIn for promoting themselves, for example under utilising the summary field (Altenburger et al, 2017). Therefore, our team, focused on leveraging this platform to address these challenges to support the growth and leadership of women in the Third Space.

This poster presents an interactive autoethnographic study as described by Chang (2008), to engage in self-reflective practice and connections, to examine how LinkedIn can enhance our professional identities as women in leadership roles within higher education and the Third Space. Conducted as part of the ASCILITE Community Mentoring Program for Women in Professional Leadership, we aim to support each other in career progression, reflective practice, and cross-university connections. Our approach was informed by Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory, which underscores the role of professional networks in fostering learning and growth, and the conceptual frameworks for Professional Identity (Bulei & Dinu, 2013) and Third Space capabilities (Henry & Boreland, 2024). This study involved self-assessment of LinkedIn profiles, best practices, and refining our approaches based on internal reflections and community feedback.

Our initial findings indicate that regular engagement, thoughtful content curation, and active participation in professional groups significantly enhance visibility and networking. Well-developed

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LinkedIn profiles are personable and linked to ePortfolios. Mentorship and community support are vital in shaping strategies, fostering solidarity and collective growth.

Our poster will present a conceptual framework for optimising LinkedIn to build professional identities for women in leadership within the Third Space. We aim to provide valuable insights for aspiring women leaders, helping them navigate the evolving educational landscape and build supportive professional communities.

Keywords: professional identity, digital identity, women leadership, third space

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