Journal of
Professional Communication **jpc**

The gendered engagement of Canada's national affairs and legislative elite, online

Denise Brunsdon⋆

GCI Group, Toronto (Canada)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This paper explores the differences in style and impact of online engagement by gender for Members of Parliament, national affairs journalists and top lawyers. The author assesses the degree to which men and women in these circles participate in blogging, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. The findings demonstrate that, although professional women often participate in all social media platforms as much as men, and sometimes more, men tend to have larger followings of fans and readers. Potential reasons for this discrepancy are discussed.

An unlikely force generated the idea for a paper assessing the role of gender in online engagement among Canada's national affairs and legislative elites. The motivation behind this research came from a column by Margaret Wente in the *Globe and Mail* about her refusal to blog. With less rigorous logic than is displayed in many blog posts, she ironically claims that blogging is thoughtless, ergo male, ergo blarney.

According to Wente, the main negative to blogging is the lack of time allotted by the medium to learn and shape opinions about issues, and that the main benefit is a self-indulgent display of intellectual egoism. In other words, the instant gratification of announcing an opinion on an issue or engaging in an exchange about that opinion is the primary motivating force behind blogging. She thus concludes that because women are more sensitive to the time burden of blogging and less interested in the value derived from opinion dissemination, blogging is a more "male" activity. She goes one step further in dismissing those who accept the cost-benefit calculation of blogging and implies that their rational choice is a form of sickness or abnormality, snidely labeled "male

answer syndrome."

> Guys seek thrills and speed. They go for the adrenalin rush. They get pumped by going higher, faster, farther than anyone else. They want lots of action and instant gratification. That's also why guys like blogging — instant opinions, and lots of them…

> Men clearly have an urge to blog that women lack. Like extreme snowmobiling, the blogosphere is dominated by men. Not many women are interested enough in spitting out an opinion on current events every 20 minutes…

> I believe the urge to blog is closely related to the sex-linked compulsion known as male answer syndrome. MAS is the reason why guys shoot up their hands first in math class. MAS also explains why men are so quick to have opinions on subjects they know little or nothing about …

> Opinionizing in public is a form of mental jousting, where the aim is to out-reason, out-argue or out-yell your opponent. Women are just as good at this as men and, in some ways, better. (No man could do it the way New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd does.) Women are simply not as interested in doing it (Wente, 2010).

Though the research in this paper does not seek to disprove Wente's position, it does put it to rest while at the same time drawing indirect inspiration from it. As for her argument, frankly it is premised on assumptions about gendered preferences that ignore key considerations about the root causes of such differences, as discussed below.

To begin with, we note that, setting aside the use of stereotypes in the column, there are some important issues raised by Wente that need to be addressed quantitatively.

A careful consideration of the quoted material cited above reveals three fundamental questions which are also prevalent in much of the current literature:

1. Whether there is a divide in blogosphere participation by gender;
2. Whether there are different motivations for blogging that are related to gender; and
3. Whether female and male bloggers blog differently either in style or content.

Scope of the present study

Until recently, the literature available concentrated on the blogosphere almost exclusively for the simple reason that essentially little else was available, but within the last five years or so, widespread use of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn has emerged, thus enabling a much broader data sampling than was available previously. Using up-to-date research about the blogosphere and gender writ large, this paper focuses on the community of Canadians identified as highly engaged and influential in mainstream democratic and legislative discourse — federal parliamentarians, journalists and lawyers — and examines what the literature says concerning the three questions raised above.

First, however, we need to look in some detail at the several problems underlying those three research questions in order to better appreciate and understand what they ultimately reveal about today's expanded blogosphere. Establishing this background will accentuate the research findings contained in the latter part of this paper.

Background

Theoretical Underpinnings

That men and women are different is not news. Judging gender characteristics as positive or negative, however, is where harm arises. To say that men cannot resist the urge to practise intellectual self-aggrandizing online, as Wente does, is as problematic as saying that women can't resist the urge to shop.

First, it is not at all obvious that gendered traits can be separated from commonly communicated gender norms. Do men really take longer to ask for directions, or have you just heard this in stand-up comedy skits too often? Do women really spend endless amounts of time getting ready for a date, or is that just something what you've seen in too many Hollywood movies?

Second, even if a trait can be described as gendered i.e. one gender exhibits the trait more than another, is such behaviour organic, by choice or by socialization? It is no straightforward matter to show that gendered traits exist in strong relation to the sex of the person associated with them. Rather, they appear to be largely shaped by the norms and preferences constructed by society and subconsciously learned or adopted by individuals through the many events, images and conversations that make up daily life. If this observation is correct, then it follows that to criticize some individuals and laud others on the basis of socially-constructed traits, including gender-based traits, is both unfair

and unhelpful not to mention meaningless. What then can be said concerning gender-based traits? As we will see later, there are a number of different factors to consider in order merely to arrive at an analysis that provides light on just what constitutes gender difference.

In brief, explanations for differences in behaviour between genders segment into three generic considerations:

1) The socialization argument that gender norms are learned through reinforcing behaviour taught from one generation to the next (Welch, 1977, p. 711; Brint, 2006, p. 132; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960);[1]
2) The situational argument that day-to-day responsibilities and statuses, be they familial, marital, parental, or professional shape our gender norms (Welch, 1977, p. 715; Lane, 1959; Fuller, 2004);
3) The structural argument that gender norms are more closely related to our place in various education and income strata (Fuller, 2004, p. 940; Andersen, 1975, p. 448).

In the context of mainstream politics, situational arguments are more relevant than either factors based on socialization or those based on structural arguments (Fuller, 2004, p. 940; Welch, 1977, p. 714; Brunsdon, 2007, p. 20). Though all three factors have some role to play, the context limiting this study favours an approach based on situational explanation as the most statistically convincing factor and therefore the lens through which this paper is, pardon the pun, constructed. Moreover, the statistical preponderance of the situational approach, given its close connections with individuality and personal choice, is precisely the reason why, as mentioned, it is unhelpful, even meaningless to criticize individuals basing one's judgment on gendered traits that are influenced by situation, rather than personal active decisions.

We first examine what the literature reveals about the blogosphere minus new arrivals such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Blogosphere participation by gender

Simply put, women are blogging as much as men; multiple studies have shown that the blogosphere breakdown by gender is at or near 50/50 (Herring,

---

[1] Susan Welch summarized this position in 1977 in her article "Women as Political Animals?" but essentially articulated the socialization argument of Campbell et al. (pp. 483-493) who provided the original political socialization argument. Steven Brint's (p. 32) definition is useful as a more general social science definition.

Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004, Table 1; Schler, Koppel, Argamon, & Penne-
baker, 2006, Table 1; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Lopez, 2009, p. 734; Guernsey, 2002).
If the purpose of this paper were to rebut Wente's argument, it would end here.

Worth exploring however, is how men and women differ in their blogging.
Qualitative research has demonstrated that subject matter and style of blog-
ging are two key ways that women differ from men.

Blogging content by gender

The two general typologies under which most blogs fall are information-
seeking/surveillance or entertainment/leisure (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009,
p. 440). Information seeking/surveillance blogs, also commonly known as fil-
ter blogs, are likely to be about current or public events as well as interpreta-
tions or viewpoints about them. For example, posts about Supreme Court ap-
pointments or a new study on health and exercise are filter blogs. Entertain-
ment/leisure blogs, also commonly referred to as personal blogs, are likely to
be about first-hand or private experiences. For example, posts reviewing a con-
cert or describing a bad customer service experience classify as personal blog-
ging. The difference can also be viewed in simple "top-down" versus "bottom-
up" terms, or mainstream versus grassroots content generation. Information-
seeking/surveillance bloggers tend to apply their thoughts to large public
events with the clear intent of disseminating their personal perspective. Enter-
tainment/leisure bloggers, on the other hand, create content out of their day-
to-day experience by reflecting on them in a public forum, with no particular
desire to convince others of their thoughts.

This is where terminology plays a role. Wente's description of male answer
syndrome accurately touches on the lack of an English term to capture the
human urge to publicly demonstrate one's opinion. The term that most accu-
rately captures what she is describing is likely "affichement" blogging.[2] How-
ever, for the purposes of this paper the term "surveillance blogging" will be
used instead, not only for academic standardization, as it is the term the re-
search community seems to have settled on, but because "surveillance" de-
notes one half of the emerging "surveillance/sousveillance" blogging typolo-
gy.[3] Though "sousveillance" is a non-traditional term this French-English pair

---

[2] This term is rooted in the French verb "afficher," which means "to post." The French word for
the noun "poster," "affiche," also stems from this verb. "Afficher" can mean to physically poster
or place something up. It can also be applied to the broader and more conceptual term of post-
ing one's beliefs or opinions — "coming out" on an issue, if you will.

[3] The other half is captured by "sousveillance," a relatively new term created using "sous," the
opposite preposition of the French word "sur" and used to describe the counter activity of sur-

of hybrids has been profiled in *New York Times Magazine* and represent a far fairer and equally esteemed description for both types of blogging. The emerging surveillance/sousveillance typology is encompassing enough to be accurate but also simple and concise enough to be helpful in teaching a conceptual understanding of the existing gender dichotomy.

A significant and growing body of research suggests that men are more likely to do surveillance blogging and women sousveillance (Herring et al., 2004; Schler et al., 2006; Pederson & Macafee, 2007, p. 1481).

Blogging style by gender

Just as men and women speak and write differently, so too do they blog differently. Antonio Garcia Gomez links historical research on the use of language and gender stereotyping to the internet and blogs, reminding us through his study of young British and Spanish female bloggers that the way gender is constructed through language makes it a paramount consideration in the dialogue about online communications (Gomez, 2010, p. 28).

But the impact of gender on blogging extends far past just language or topic. There are various ways beyond simple word usage and construction that can differ by gender, such as post length, link count, blog roll size or tag variety, to name a few.

For example, a British study found that women tend to have more outbound links in a blog post (Pederson & Macafee, 2007, p. 1483). As well, research on partisan political blogs indicates that male bloggers post more frequently than women, but women write more positive blog posts than men do (Brunsdon, 2007, p. 27). Moreover, women's posts tend to be lengthier than men's (Brunsdon, 2007, p. 27).

In terms of motivations for blogging, still more research shows that men are more focused on personal outcome expectations while women focus on self-expression. (Lu & Hsaio, 2009, p. 148).

Finally, in terms of changing blogs or providers, women are more sensitive than men to satisfaction with their current blog provider while men are more likely to focus on attractiveness in alternative setups (Zhang, Lee, Cheung, & Huaping, 2009, p. 544).

Overall sexism in the blogosphere

---

veillance ("watching from above") to imply "watching from below," i.e. observations from an individual's perspective.

As already implied, there is more to establishing gender equity in the blogosphere than a mere consideration of simple equality in terms of overall numerical participation. Data, as previously outlined, demonstrates that men and women blog at equal rates. First of all, we repeat that in terms of numerical percentages, men and women blog in equal proportions.

But strict equality in overall blogosphere participation is not mirrored by strict equality in sub-sphere participation. This appears to be a result stemming from the observable fact that men tend to engage in surveillance blogging while women favour or prefer sousveillance blogging. It must also be noted that the differences in style and topic clearly indicate that men and women occupy different spaces online. This has led some observers to posit that there is an ongoing struggle for blogosphere equity and that such equality can only be realized through the attainment of equal respect for blogosphere topics and arenas that tend to be dominated by women. A further aspect of this struggle would see the attainment of gender equity in per capita participation of all spheres where actual female participation or employment equity current lags.

These last two goals, however, can be contradictory since wanting women to be as active in spheres dominated by men validates the importance or influence of these surveillance spheres and implicitly accentuates the perceived lesser importance of those spheres where women dominate, namely the sousveillance spheres. In fact, many have seen this perceived inequality in participation and credibility as the foundational theoretical concern underlying calls for equality in participation, particularly in mainstream power spheres such as politics, journalism and law. At the most basic level, this struggle for accepted equality is often seen as the principle factor that spurred first-wave feminism: spheres that men overpopulate, often the public ones, are deemed society's most important, while areas where women disproportionately toil, often the private ones (i.e. sousveillance), are deemed less important. Unsurprisingly, this inequality in appreciation applies very much to blogs (Gregg, 2006, p. 151) where information-seeking type blogs (surveillance blogging) are perceived as being more important, with the result that male bloggers are consequently perceived as having greater credibility (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009, p. 446). Witness the following citations taken from the literature:

> By privileging filter blogs and thereby implicitly evaluating the activities of adult males as more interesting, important, and/or newsworthy than those of [non-filter] blog authors, public discourses about weblogs marginalize the activities of women and teen bloggers (Herring et al., 2004, p. 4).

> What these debates also typically avoid is any significant debate about what makes a topic 'political' or 'newsworthy' or 'important' in the first place, and the history of gender bias within the bastions of knowledge

production (such as educational, media or political institutions) which have set the terms of public debate for so long (Gregg, 2006, p. 155).

Each of these perspectives is in some way concerned with degrees of *recognition*; the content of women's blogs is perceived by some to be less noteworthy than men's by virtue of their often domestic and personal sphere of reference, whereas men's blogs are often seen to be more engaged in political debate, especially when the notion of what counts *as* political remains undefined (Gregg, 2006, p. 153).

In terms of the literature examining the blogosphere exclusively, the three online communities that make up the subsamples of this paper's overall sample — journalism, law and politics — qualify as classically high-value, male-dominated public arenas. Data taken from such a context confirms the proportionately small number of women's voices that are present: though women make up 52 per cent of the population, they represent only 13 per cent of the top lawyers in the country as selected by *Best Lawyers*, a peer reviewed publication, 21 per cent of the House of Commons, and 32 per cent of the sample's top print journalists or journalism practitioners. In terms of simple mathematical percentages, goes the argument, wishing for women to participate at exact per capita levels with men in surveillance blogging is an unfair request.

Some have expressed the conviction that meeting such a demand requires that work needs to be done to change institutional credibility; that is, the goal should be more credibility for institutions dominated by women and less for those dominated by men in order to balance the credibility skew rather than to demand stricter equality in participation. In other words, don't judge the gender gap through participation (or lack thereof), rather, judge the credibility gap.

Opposite this theoretical demand is the pragmatic argument that the opinions of, and decisions by politicians, journalists and lawyers have a tangible and significant impact on the lives of Canadians. Moreover, the online conversations happening with and around politicians, journalists and lawyers influence these opinions and decisions. Thus, we should want women participating in equal numbers in community membership whether it is in real life or the online world.

Though equal membership in the political, journalistic and legal communities has yet eluded women, there remains a desire for women to be as engaged per capita in the online conversations that influence opinions and decision-making. Currently, however, the majority of media coverage focuses on male bloggers (Pederson & Macafee, 2007, p. 1475). This is in part due to the structure and dynamics of the blogosphere. Most A-lists that rank blogs contain far more male bloggers than female (Lopez, 2009, p. 735). Men are also more likely to be incorporated into a blogroll (Pollard, 2003). The promotion effect of male-dominated A-listing and male-dominated blogroll linking serves only to

facilitate and centralize online conversational power and prestige among men. In terms of the pragmatic argument, women participate in spheres more focused on parenting, education, health and grassroots community activism not because they want to, but because they cannot break into key mainstream decision-making spheres.

> Thus, in the blogosphere, the rich (measured in the number of links) get richer, while the poor remain poor. This dynamic creates a skewed distribution where there are a very few highly ranked blogs with many incoming links, followed by a steep falloff and a very long list of medium-to low-ranked bloggers with few or no incoming links (Drezner & Farrell, 2004, p. 35).

> To break into the A-list you usually need to get noticed and linked to by an A-lister. Guess which gender is more likely to benefit from that? (Pollard, 2003)

And in terms of online-specific participation, the internet as a medium doesn't eradicate gender, it intensifies it. Just as men monopolize public dialogue, so too do they monopolize online dialogue (Brunsdon, 2007, p. 26; Kramarae & Taylor, 1993).

> Participants in online communities were likely to bring with them pre-existing patterns of hierarchy and male domination conditioned by [offline individuals] early in life (Pederson & Macafee, 2007, p. 1473).

In other words, credibility gap aside, closing gender gaps in participation anywhere remains a top priority.

The literature review of the blogosphere has a number of clear messages concerning the dynamics of the blogosphere as they relate to gendered traits and dynamics ensuing from them. But does a wider sampling including data from Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn reveal the same picture? This we must now see.

By focusing on political, journalistic and legal blogging in Canada, and using the situational argument as basis, this study does lean toward the pragmatic approach to the gender gap in blogging, but is careful to embody several aspects of the theoretical approach as well. Firstly, it is recognized that the theoretical and pragmatic approaches need not be contradictory. As we increase the profile of women in online communications around the mainstream political, journalistic and legal realms, so too must we work to raise the credibility of women-dominated realms such as parenting or health and well-being blog communities (basically sousveillance blogging).

Secondly, the research applies no judgment or normative assessments about

the data. Though men may be higher in some variables and women in others, it purposely avoids normative statements such as "better."

We now turn to the results our research has produced and in our conclusion we will comment on similarities and differences we have observed obtaining between results based on the traditional literature review looking at the blogosphere exclusively and those derived from considering the wider scope that includes data from Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as well as from the blogosphere.

Methodology

Population

The data sample is composed of the following three communities:
1. Federal Parliamentarians[4]
2. National print journalists and related journalism practitioners[5]
3. Nationally recognized lawyers[6]

Independent Variable

Multiple demographics were tracked, with gender taken as the primary independent variable for measurement against online engagement. In a perfect world, age would come in as a second key variable by which all the measurements are held constant because technology usage and comfort skews by age, with young people tending to be more proficient when adapting to innovation. Unfortunately, age as an independent variable had to be left out because publicly available age data was only possible for about half the sample, and segregated too much via sub-sample. Age data tended to be available almost exclusively for the Members of Parliament, so cutting the sample down to only those with known ages in order to hold constant the variable would have cut drastically the breadth of conclusions that could be drawn.

---

[4] n=308 (Members selected in the 2008 federal campaign for each of Canada's electoral districts.)

[5] n= 179 (Canadian Association of Journalists National Board, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression Board, Ottawa Press Gallery Bureau Chiefs, Ottawa Press Gallery Executive, and the senior editorial boards of the *National Post, Globe and Mail, Toronto Star,* and *Le Devoir*.)

[6] n=112 (Canada's Best Lawyers 2010 in the provinces of British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario as selected by the *Best Lawyers* peer-review publication.)

Dependent Variables

Listed below are the ten factors for measurement chosen for the study. They were selected from a broad list of potential variables.[7] The variables used in this study were chosen because they lend themselves best to foundational, basic measurements and also because they are empirically verifiable. Also, it is important to draw social media data from public information rather than through privacy filters given that many social networks offer members the opportunity to hide information. Using variables drawn from social media data allows us to work with variables that are most likely to be consistently made public.

1. Personal Website: Does the person have an individual, personal webspace — i.e. web address — dedicated to information or promotion about their activities? Normally, this would be a more common firstnamelastname.com interpretation, but we have also included personal Facebook or Myspace pages. However, fan or supporter pages on Facebook were not included. For Parliamentarians, the interpretation applied included personal websites linked to or facilitated by the Parties, which contained biographical information or legislative news and updates that would qualify as "personal" in nature. This does not, however, include the Parliament of Canada web pages, though they do contain some biographical information.

2. Blog: Does the person have a blog? This variable requires a lot of definition, especially given the surprising findings. The two elements of first-hand contribution and demonstration of personal motivation were key in determining who did and didn't qualify as a blogger. Blogs in the form of updates focused narrowly around an individual's professional work did not meet the qualifications and were left out. For example, many politicians arguably had blogs that were merely descriptive of their job functions and not obviously written by the individual. Similarly, some journalists also had regular updates in ways that mirrored blogging — news-oriented by-lined articles available exclusively on the web — but on the media outlet's websites, and thus inextricably linked to their employment. To be defined as a blogger one had to utilize one's web location to post multiple comments expressing personal opinions, sharing reflections on their work and/or relaying information separately from their employer's URL. If the possibility existed that the individual blogged solely for the purposes of pay, it seems unhelpful to include them in comparative statistics

---

[7] Some professional social media measurement suites contain over one hundred aspects of online social interaction to measure.

that are meant to measure natural likelihood or affinity. Wordpress.com, Blogger.com, and even regular posts on a Facebook fan page were all considered blogging. Additional allowances were made for people who self-identified as "bloggers" even if the blog could not be located.

3. Facebook Fan Page: Does the person have a fan page?

4. Fans on Facebook Pages: How many fans does the person have on their fan page?

5. Twitter: Does the person have an active Twitter handle?

6. Twitter: Following: How many followers does the person have?

7. Twitter Follower/Following Ratio: How many followers does the person have compared to the number of people they follow?

8. Twitter Growth Rate: How many followers does the person gain per week?

9. Tweet Frequency: How many Tweets per day does the person make?

10. LinkedIn: Does the person have an account on LinkedIn?

Results

Results are presented in tabular form followed by explanatory comments.

Personal Website

Women were as likely as men to have personal websites. A percentage breakdown matches earlier-referenced data about gender equality in the blogosphere, but in this case, in the legal, journalistic and political circles as well. Half of all men and half of all women in the sample had personal websites.

Table 1: Personal Website %

	Male	Female
Yes	50	50
No	50	50

Blog

Women are more likely to blog. They are more likely to provide multiple first-hand writings at a single online location unaffiliated with an employer. That said, overall blogging rates for the sample are extremely low; only 2% of the male population and 8% of the female population blog.

Table 2: Blogger %

	Male	Female
Yes	2	8
No	98	92

Facebook Fan Page

Women and men are equally likely to have Fan Pages — slightly more than one-third of either genders have fan pages.[8]

Table 3: Fan Page %

	Male	Female
Yes	35	36
No	65	64

Facebook Fans

Though men and women are equally likely to have fan pages, men have double the average fans per page. The standard deviation indicates one major factor, which is that all four House of Commons political party leaders, who have the most fans, are men. This impacts many of the variables.

---

[8] The popularity of these pages, thanks in part to layout and building changes by Facebook, is growing quickly. As explanation to the statistics, please note that this research was conducted in August 2010.

Table 4: Fan average

	Male	Female
Mean	462.7	236.62
S.D.	2910.34	812.43

Twitter

Women are slightly more likely to be on Twitter.

Table 5: Twitter %

	Male	Female
Yes	21	29
No	79	71

Twitter Following

While men and women have nearly the same Twitter uptake, men — similar to Facebook fan pages — have almost triple the followers.

Table 6: Fan average

	Male	Female
Mean	652.52	218.92
S.D.	4580.27	533.2

Twitter Follower/Following ratio

Men and women in the sample population have close to the same, quite high ratio. This means that, though men have more followers, they are also more likely to follow others.

Table 7: Twitter ratio, follower:following

	Male	Female
Mean	15.43	14.19
S.D.	35.52	35.16

Twitter Growth Rate

Using Sysomos software to tabulate the data for each handle, men had a much higher weekly growth rate than women. The average male in the sample gained 56 followers and the average woman 11.

Table 8: Twitter growth rate

	Male	Female
Mean	56.4	10.93
S.D.	174.08	10.19

Tweet Frequency

Women and men are extremely close in terms of average Tweets per day. Both post slightly less than one Tweet per day, with women posting slightly more frequently.

Table 9: Tweets per day

	Male	Female
Mean	0.89	0.91
S.D.	1.81	1.33

LinkedIn

Women are more likely than men to be members of the professional networking site LinkedIn.

Table 10: LinkedIn

	Male	Female
Mean	12.6	16.5
S.D.	87.4	83.5

Analysis

The most striking aspect of the data is that although women are participating at the same or greater rate than men for every activity variable, men have a greater following and more attention paid to them from others online.

That men are leading the political parties is not the only explanation, as it merely affirms the earlier discussion around pre-existing patterns of hierarchy emerging online. Moreover, the political party leaders do not account for the entire disparity. Even if one were to treat them as outliers and remove them from the population, there is still gender inequality for which to account.

That said, there are many less discouraging lessons in the data set when it comes to gender equity online. Namely, though women make up a minority of each population sub-set of socially-ascribed top lawyers, politicians and journalists, they remain as, or more, engaged online per capita than men. The cases in which women are more engaged online may speak to the ability of the internet to provide a voice and outlet for underrepresented groups and work against some of the inter-institutional barriers that they face. Certainly the internet itself holds immense barriers, as indicated by follower and fan growth favouring men; however, that women are actively participating and utilizing the space in equal numbers and growing their own followings week by week, indicates that it holds value to them.

Conclusion

Women are participating at the same rate as, or greater, than men for every online engagement variable, including presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Men, however, have larger online followings as measured by Twitter followers and Facebook Fans. It would be misleading to frame this as "popularity" because one can be well followed but not necessarily well liked or followed poorly but greatly appreciated by those few. At its core, the issue is one of favouritism: the kind of structural and social favouritism that is at the heart of existing gender bias.

That said, that men are not more engaged than women comes as a valuable

insight. It clearly shows that the conclusion held by the pragmatic argument described earlier, namely that expecting women to participate at a numerically equivalent proportion in a surveillance-dominated space, is unrealistic and/or unfair no longer holds true. Engagement equality also demonstrates a willingness by, and potential for women to contribute their voices to the online discussion around national affairs and legislative discourse. This simple fact reminds us that discrepancies in women's followings or reach of voice come not by fault of the individual actors, but through bias in the system at large. That women are not as visible as men in online discussions appears to be due largely to their corresponding lack of representation in the greater populations of Parliament, the journalism community and among the ranks of so-called top lawyers.

Postscript

Finally, as a general academic note, this paper holds additional value outside the research proper. It presents some of the first Canadian work to assess platforms outside blogs per se only. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are part of a large and unknown academic field in Canada right now, especially as they relate to gender and national affairs or legislative influence. Also, with new platforms and improvements to online measurement software like Sysomos, the ability to find and assess more variables grows weekly. Combine this breadth in potential variables over multiple online platforms with the simple mathematical efficiency of innovation in software, and it makes for an excellent research cocktail.

For statisticians of the sociological and public opinion worlds, along with technological and digital innovation comes a growing social trend toward releasing basic personal information. This comfort may be at times driven by a concern to manage one's reputation online, rather than an inherent comfort per se, but the end result is more accurate cross-tabulating by demographic. Thinking back to the early days of the internet, when blog pseudonyms and anonymity ruled the day, the ability to draw reliable conclusions without any independent variables was not an easy task. Yes, internet research continues to hold restrictions — in the case of this paper, not knowing the age of the majority of population members restricted the study's more extensive statistical analysis — but the implications for the present analysis are minimal. Currently, two additional examples, systems and logarithms to measure province of residence by IP address or gender breakdown in Twitter followings are not yet statistically reliable, but they will be soon. As the number of variables grows, so does our ability to improve and refine statistical measurement.

Finally, as for that tenacious, ubiquitous gender inequality: if only this pa-

per could cure it as easily as it did male answer syndrome.

References

Andersen, K. (1975). Working women and political participation, 1952-1972. *American Journal of Political Science, 19*(3), 439-453.

Armstrong, C. L., & McAdams, M. J. (2009). Blogs of information: How gender cues and individual motivations influence perceptions of credibility. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 14*(3) 435-456.

Brint, S. G. (2006). *Schools and societies* (2nd ed.). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Brunsdon, D. (2007). The influence of gender on level and nature of partisan blogosphere participation. *McGill Journal of Political Studies,* 17-34.

Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, M., & Stokes, D. (1960). *The American Voter.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Drezner, D., & Farrell, H. (2004, November/December). Web of influence. *Foreign Policy, 145,* 32-40.

Fuller, J. E. (2004). Equality in cyberdemocracy? Gauging gender gaps in on-line civic participation. *Social Science Quarterly, 85*(4), 938-57.

Gómez, A. G. (2010). Competing narratives, gender and threaded identity in cyberspace. *Journal of Gender Studies, 19*(1), 27.

Gregg, M. (2006). Posting with passion: Blogs and the politics of gender. In A. Bruns, & J. Jacobs (Eds.). *Uses of Blogs.* New York: Peter Lang, 151-160.

Guernsey, L. (2002, November 28). Telling all online: It's a man's world (isn't it?). *New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

Herring, S. C., Kouper, I., Scheidt, L., Wright, E. L. (2004). Women and children last: The discursive construction of weblogs. In L. J. Gurak, S. Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff, & J. Reyman (Eds.), *Into the blogosphere: Rhetoric, community, and culture of weblogs.* Retrieved from http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/women_and_children.html

Hoffman, J. (2006, December 10). Sousveillance. *The New York Times Magazine.* Re

trieved from http://www.nytimes.com2006/12/10/magazine/10section3b.t-3.html?_r=1

Koppel, M., Schler, J., Argamon, S., & Pennebaker, J. (2006). Effects of age and gender on blogging. *Proceedings of 2006 AAAI Spring Symposium on Computational Ap proaches to Analysing Weblogs.* Stanford, CA.

Kramarae, C., & Taylor, H.J. (1993). Women and men on electronic networks: A con versation or a monologue? In H.J. Taylor, C. Kramarae, & M. Ebben (Eds.), *Women, Information Technology, and Scholarship.* Urbana, IL: Center for Advanced Study. 52-61.

Lane, R. E. (1959). *Political Life: Why and how People Get Involved in Politics*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006, July 19). Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet's new story tellers. *Pew Internet and American Life Project.* Retrieved from http://www.pewinter net.org/Reports/2006/Bloggers.aspx

Lopez, L. (2009). The radical act of 'mommy blogging': Redefining motherhood through the blogosphere. *New Media & Society, 11*(5), 729-47.

Lu, H., & Hsiao, K. (2009). Gender differences in reasons for frequent blog posting. *Online Information Review, 33*(1), 135-56.

Pedersen, S., & Macafee, C. (2007). Gender differences in British blogging. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1472-1492.

Pollard, D. (2003, October 30). Is the Blogosphere Sexist? [Web log post] Retrieved from http://howtosavetheworld.ca/2003/10/30/is-the-blogosphere-sexist/

Welch, S. (1977). Women as political animals? A test of some explanations for male-female political participation differences. *American Journal of Political Science, 21*(4), 711-730.

Wente, M. (2010, March 17). Why are bloggers male? *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com

Zhang, K. Z. K., Lee, M. K. O., Cheung, C.M.K., & Huaping, C. (2009). Understanding the role of gender in bloggers' switching behavior. *Decision Support Systems, 47*(4), 540-6.