

The Role of Women and Anonymity in Computer-Mediated Communication

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Abstract

Due to the anonymity provided by computer-mediated communication (CMC) on the Internet, it is now believed that the gender of online communicators is considered unimportant or difficult to determine. This is contrary to the common tendencies of male dominance that are seen in interpersonal communication. Research consistently indicates that males tend to hold leadership positions in confrontations. This is a well-established fact in the field of interpersonal communication. This programme aims to streamline the process of achieving gender equality by promoting equal recognition and engagement for individuals of all genders. This purpose will be accomplished by promoting equitable and impartial opportunities for participation and acknowledgment among individuals of all genders. This chapter presents a comprehensive literature analysis that covers the research completed between 1989 and 2013 on the subject of gender and computer-mediated communication (CMC). The study included a wide range of communication methods, including mobile, textual, and multimodal, among others. This inquiry covers the time period from 1989 to 2013. Research abundantly refutes the assumptions that computer-mediated communication (CMC) eliminates gender-related power dynamics and status inequality, and that gender is either invisible or immaterial in this arena of activity. The assertions were put up by scholars who hypothesised that computer-mediated communication (CMC) would eradicate the power dynamics and status differences linked to gender. At some point, both the idea of anonymity and the difference between variety and inequality will surely be explored.

Introduction

Because of computer-mediated communication, also known as CMC, it is thought that less powerful people and organizations may be able to participate on an equal basis with their more powerful counterparts. Researchers have posited the idea that a particular mode of online communication may contribute to greater gender parity in the workplace. Women stand to gain the most from this because, historically speaking, women have held lesser social statuses, had less political clout, and had less economic power. Text-based computer-mediated communication (also known as CMC) is devoid of both visual and auditory clues; hence, the genders of online communicators are either unnoticeable or irrelevant. According to Graddol and Swann (1989), this phenomenon challenges the norms of masculine dominance in interpersonal communication, which, in turn, makes it easier for men and women to interact equally and have their contributions recognized. Additionally, the norms of masculine dominance in interpersonal communication have been there for quite some time. The ability to communicate online while being anonymous is a perk that is enjoyed by men as well. One school of thought contends that women experience fewer obstacles in fields of endeavor where restrictions are either not prevalent at all or are experienced

less frequently than by men. This is a result of the progress that has been made in technology. After thirty years since the invention of computer-mediated communication (CMC), it is only logical to ponder whether or not this promise has been completely fulfilled. It is feasible to conduct investigations into this issue. According to Markus (1994), the phrase "technological determinism" refers to the theory that the social influence of a technology can be deduced from the fundamental qualities of that technology. On the other hand, this perspective does not take into account the very important fact that the development and use of technology are molded and entwined within the context of a larger social framework (Kling, McKim, and King, 2003). Are men and women using the internet to communicate in different ways, or is this more likely due to deeply rooted cultural differences that are unaffected by computer-mediated communication (CMC)? What role does maintaining one's identity play in either outcome, and how does it play a role? This chapter takes an in-depth look at the research that has been conducted on gender and computer-mediated communication (CMC) and has been published between 1989, which is the year that gender-related subjects were first introduced into academic literature, and 2013. Since 1989, academic writing has been required to contain discussions of issues pertaining to gender. In order to facilitate online communication at the time, it was critical for there to be a proportion of male and female Internet users in the United States that was equal to one another. During that entire span of time, the proportion of male and female Internet users was approximately equal. When all of the study is taken into consideration, it is clear that the claims that gender is indiscernible or irrelevant in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and that gender-based power and status disparities are equalized in CMC are not true. Additionally, the premise that gender is immaterial in CMC is also debunked by the research. In addition, it is abundantly obvious that the claims that have been made regarding the equalization of status and power inequalities based on gender in CMC are not genuine. In total, this chapter is broken up into seven distinct sections. In this section, we'll discuss some of the issues that arise when considering Internet access and usage in relation to gender. Following this, data from both the past and the present will be presented as part of this study in an effort to lend credence to claims of gender equality in interactive textual computer-mediated communication (CMC). The fourth part of this investigation investigates the ways in which gender is portrayed and behaved in multimodal computer-mediated communication (CMC). This area has a particular emphasis on graphical avatars, pictures, as well as audio and video chat capabilities. At this phase in the dialogue, the topics of discussion include anonymity and the distinction between inequity and diversity. In its conclusion, the study identifies the areas that require more investigation and makes some forecasts on likely future developments in the subject of gender and computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Get to and Use

The establishment of the CMC came about ten years before the birth of the Internet. According to Hafner and Lyon (1996), during the early phases of the Arpanet, which served as the precursor to the Internet, network access was restricted to individuals associated with the United States Department of Defense and computer scientists, with a noticeable gender imbalance favoring males. In addition, computer scientists were more likely to have access to the network than women. The individuals who were instrumental in the development and deployment of computer networking primarily utilized the Internet as a medium that facilitated electronic mail communication. This was their primary use of the Internet. Throughout the entirety of the decade that encompassed the 1970s, this phenomenon was noticed. The name "Internet" was first used in an official capacity somewhere around the year 1983. The Internet had substantial expansion throughout the decade of the 1980s, which allowed it to extend its sphere of influence to include other institutions, notably those concerned with computing. This extension was notable in that it featured participation from academics as well as students, with males constituting the majority of those involved. Additionally, the growing network incorporated several additional types of asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as discussion boards. The growth described earlier took place throughout the decade of the 1980s in our historical timeline. In the course of the 1990s, there was a discernible uptick in the momentum of a general trend towards extensive accessibility. This was mostly attributable to the growth of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), which can be read as "Internet Service Providers." Users were able to establish connections to the internet thanks, in large part, to the efforts of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), who played a critical role in making it possible for consumers to communicate more easily from the comfort of their own homes. This included the exploitation of systems that allow for synchronous conversation. Concurrently with these developments, there has been a discernible rise in the proportion of women using the internet, which has been accompanied by a sizeable improvement in the overall level of internet literacy and the number of people having personal access to the internet. Nevertheless, the use of computers posed a challenge to the movement toward greater gender parity for the majority of the decade that began in the 1990s. The employment rates of women in positions that provided them with access to the Internet were significantly lower than those of men when the study was first conducted, which was a striking disparity. In addition, it was found that women showed a higher level of hesitation in their usage of computer technology and demonstrated a decreased propensity to spend the necessary time and effort for the acquisition of key skills (Balka, 1993). This finding was supported by the fact that women were also found to be less likely to acquire critical skills. In addition, research has shown that males have a larger tendency to be employed in occupations that provide access to the Internet than females do. The research conducted by Sproull (1992) reveals that throughout the early 1990s, the proportion of female Internet users was expected to be somewhere around five percent. This information is derived from Ebben and Kramarae (1993). According to the findings of the research that was carried out by Herring (1992 and 1993), it was

discovered that women had a larger propensity to experience emotions of alienation inside the frequently heated environment of online discussion boards. In addition to this, it was discovered that women have a lower predisposition to actively participate in these online discussion forums than males do. Certain people, primarily men, actively sought to disrupt computer-mediated communication (CMC) platforms that were specifically designed for women (Collins-Jarvis 1997; Herring, Johnson, and DiBenedetto, 2002). This was done in a manner that was consistent with the dominant ideology of unrestrained expression and permissiveness that characterized the Internet during that particular era (Brail 1996; Sutton 1994). Because of its extensive use, user-friendly graphical interfaces, and the availability of popular content such as online news and commerce, the birth of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s led to stronger security measures and improved awareness of the Internet. This was due to the widespread adoption of the World Wide Web and the improved recognition of the Internet. This alteration took place at the same time. There was a discernible rise in the number of women who were active participants on the internet. According to the findings of research that was carried out by CyberAtlas in the year 2000, slightly more than half of the people who used the internet in the United States during the year 2000 were categorized as being female. In recent years, there has been a noticeable reduction in the gender gap that has been noticed in internet usage. According to historical statistics, men have traditionally held a significant advantage in terms of the number of website visits, logins, and total amount of time spent online. According to research that was conducted by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in 2009, it was found that males continued to have higher levels of participation when it came to using the internet. Despite this, the current gender distribution of people who use the internet in the United States bears a striking resemblance to the gender distribution that is seen in the general population. In conclusion, it is clear that men, in comparison to women, have a stronger propensity to connect with websites, demonstrate more frequent online engagement, and devote a bigger amount of their time to their online interests. These characteristics may be seen in their online behavior. The proportion of female users to male users on several social media platforms has shifted noticeably in recent years, with the former now outnumbering the latter. This shift in demographic composition can be attributed to a number of factors. According to Brenner (2012), it may be stated that women display higher degrees of consistency and involvement when compared to men in their utilization of social networking sites like Facebook. In addition, there is evidence to show that women have a larger propensity than males to participate in a variety of social networking platforms, such as Twitter, Yelp, Pinterest, and the microblogging site Twitter. This is in contrast to the fact that men have a stronger propensity to engage in these activities. On the other hand, one may detect a major disparity in the utilization of music-sharing networks such as last.fm and Reddit, where a far higher percentage of male users actively participate in these platforms. This can be seen as a big mismatch. It is important to highlight that the social news platform Reddit has attracted notice for occasionally publishing content that displays sexist tendencies (HuffPost Women, 2012; Williams, 2012). This is something that should be

mentioned because it is noteworthy. In addition, Lam et al. (2011) discovered that a sizeable proportion of people who are actively contributing to Wikipedia are of the male gender. In addition, it is important to note that the proportion of male users on the professional social networking site LinkedIn is roughly twice as high as the proportion of female users, which is something that should be mentioned because it is notable. According to LinkedIn employees, there is a gender gap in professional networking, which can be explained by historical patterns. This gap was reported by LinkedIn employees. Women have historically placed a greater priority on the maintenance of relationships, although men have historically demonstrated more ability in professional networking, particularly in certain occupations (Berkow, 2011). Women have traditionally placed a greater premium on the maintenance of personal relationships. According to Fallows (2005), or on the other hand, Tannen (1990 gives an other viewpoint. According to the findings of Muskanell and Guadagno (2012), women are more likely to engage in conversation on social networking sites like Facebook with people they are already familiar with and with whom they have developed a sense of trust. An elevated level of anxiety regarding the potential hazards associated to the disclosing of personal identify and privacy can be attributed to the observed behavior. According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Fogel and Neader (2009), women are more likely to express concerns about the invasion of their privacy when it comes to situations that include using the internet. According to Crocco, Cramer, and Meier (2008), the widespread use of web-based computing has been a crucial factor in the development of a gender-neutral, equitable, and more balanced approach to the application of technology. If we define "equality" in the context of the United States as "fair and equal access to the same opportunities for individuals of both genders," then one could argue that women have reached a degree of parity with men in the sense that they have fair and equal access to the same possibilities. At the same time, a distinct trend is forming, and that pattern is that there is a considerable spike in the availability of content that is gender-specific on the Internet. In spite of the fact that the majority of online communities are dominated by male participation, it is important to point out that in today's world, women have access to a wider variety of virtual platforms than they did in earlier times. Through the utilization of social networking sites, users have the ability to restrict the accessibility of their information as well as monitor the comments that are made about it. When compared to people who participated in text-based forums during prior time periods, users of modern social networking platforms typically experience a lower level of anonymity. This is because modern social networking platforms are based on visual interfaces. The following parts are going to devote more attention to conducting additional research and providing further explanation on this phenomenon.

New research

Following the achievement of numerical parity among female Internet users in 2000 (CyberAtlas 2000), there has been a prevalent belief that gender disparities in computer-mediated communication (CMC) had reached a state of equilibrium. According to scholarly sources (Herring et al., 2004; HuffPost Women, 2012), there

has been a significant achievement of gender parity in women's engagement in online platforms, including blogs and social networks. Regarding language, the research findings, though, present conflicting results. This study includes factors that are not assumed to be dependent on gender. In their study, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) conducted an analysis of adolescent blogs, revealing that males exhibited a greater tendency to employ assertive and active language. However, no discernible gender disparities were observed in terms of the frequency of expressions suggesting collaboration and passivity. In their study, Herring and Paolillo (2006) observed that when considering the genre of blogs, specifically distinguishing between personal diary blogs and "filter" blogs that provide commentary on events beyond the blogger's control, the previously observed gender disparities in grammar word frequency were no longer evident. Nevertheless, it has been shown that females tend to create a greater quantity of the first genre, whereas males tend to produce a greater quantity of the second genre. The study conducted by Guiller and Durndell (2007) examined computer-mediated student discussion groups and found that, apart from variations in style, there were few disparities between genders in lower-level linguistic factors. Kapidzic and Herring (2011) conducted a comprehensive investigation on adolescent communication, revealing that gender disparities were most salient in the realm of discourse style, moderately discernible in terms of speech acts, and least apparent in word selection. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all individuals who utilize the Internet employ language in a manner that is influenced by gender. Buchholtz (2002) posits that female computer experts on the technology news website Slashdot adopt both aggressive and cooperative stances. In their study, Subrahmanyam, Smahel, and Greenfield (2006) observed that girls exhibited a notable level of assertiveness in matters related to sexuality within the two teenage chatrooms they examined. This finding was particularly noteworthy considering that girls tended to employ more implicit forms of communication compared to boys. These findings serve to enhance and complicate the existing corpus of research on gender and computer-mediated communication (CMC). Subsequent research corroborates the results obtained in prior inquiries. The study conducted by Koch et al. (2005) yielded results that align with the earlier research conducted by Selfe and Meyer (1991), indicating that males exhibited higher levels of dominance and assertiveness in online chat environments, even when the element of anonymity was preserved. Thompson and Murachver (2001) found that participants demonstrated the ability to accurately determine the gender of a partner by carefully examining the gendered styles as described by Herring (1993, 1996a, b). The utilization of gendered discourse patterns is still observed in the MySpace forums, as evidenced by the studies conducted by Fullwood, Morris, and Evans (2011) and Thelwall, Wilkinson, and Uppal (2010). In conjunction with the heightened utilization of exclamation marks (Waseleski, 2006) and emoticons (Baron and Ling, 2007; Tossell, et al., 2012), the latest development in female discourse is the incorporation of xo (symbolizing a kiss and a hug) within electronic mail, instant messaging, and microblogging platforms (Bennet and Simons, 2012). In addition to the presence of variety, the issue of inequity continues to endure. Although women tend

to send a larger number of tweets on Twitter in general, it has been observed that males exhibit a higher proportion of retweeting their own tweets (Mashable, 2012). According to Herring et al. (2004), there is a notable disparity in media attention and inbound links between men's blogs and women's blogs. Furthermore, the case of Kathy Sierra, a technology blogger, serves as an illustration of the issue at hand. In 2007, Sierra faced a series of sexualized death threats on her blog, originating from well-known male bloggers. These threats were directed towards her simply because she was a woman who dared to publicly express her thoughts, a phenomenon often referred to as "Writing While Female." This incident highlights the ongoing problem of women being disproportionately subjected to online verbal violence and harassment. The occurrence of intimidating forms of communication targeting women who express their opinions on social media platforms has been observed in recent examples (Marwick, 2013). This phenomenon has been found to have a negative impact on women's engagement and involvement in online spaces.

Conclusion

It's possible that the first forecasts made regarding gender and online communication won't hold true to the real condition of circumstances. This is because the forecasts are based on the flawed notion that technology is in charge of everything rather than on their foundation in reality. As a result, this situation has arisen. Computer networks are the only information technology system that have ever provided gender-neutral and equal-opportunity involvement. No other information technology system has ever existed. Compared to how things were some time ago, when only a tiny group of male elites had access to the Internet, the current state of affairs is significantly more favorable. It is now reflective of society as a whole and has finally caught up to it. 14. In addition, the manner in which an extensively utilized technology such as the Internet interacts with social and cultural forces over the course of time may still bring about change, in the same way that the typewriter and telephone altered social interactions and business practices, particularly for women (Davies 1988; Martin 1991). As more and more women throughout the world access the internet, it would be fantastic if it could evolve into a place where everyone is treated on an equal footing. The design and administration of networks, as well as the creation and management of content for publication on the internet, are careers that are becoming increasingly popular among women. The use of the internet and its policies could then be significantly altered due to the enormous technical and numerical capabilities of women. In order for this to take place, it is very necessary that a certain percentage of women hold positions in the field of information technology. It could also rely on the introduction of guidelines that encourage user accountability and the creation of CMC zones that enable users with control over who and what is allowed in their virtual surroundings. Both of these things could be necessary. The lack of research in certain areas, particularly those dealing with developing technology, limits the chapter's ability to cover as much ground as it would like to. It is necessary to conduct additional study on the following topics: user responses to multimodal presentations; language use in video and audio CMC; gender and sexuality in online communication; and

gender and race in online communication. Although one piece of research (Chun and Walters, 2011) looked at user comments on the language used in foreign YouTube videos, the researchers didn't pay a lot of attention to gender in their findings. On the internet, text, speech, and nonverbal cues are all beginning to function in a manner that is increasingly identical to one another. While this does open up new doors for CMC research, it also raise challenges for academics conducting research on gender and language.

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