

TRANSPARENCY AND OTHER JOURNALISTIC NORMS ON TWITTER

The role of gender

Dominic Lasorsa

A growing argument in communication scholarship is that quality journalism online can distinguish itself from rumor and unchecked information by being transparent, by revealing how information was obtained, so audiences can see through it to its origins and help correct errors. This study examined the extent to which female and male journalists differ in their use of Twitter and, specifically, their journalistic transparency on Twitter. Female journalists were found to differ little from male journalists in their Twitter presence, topics, opining or gatekeeping, but they were significantly more transparent. They revealed more about their jobs, personal lives and everyday activities, and they linked more to external websites, all indicators of greater transparency. While women working for national news media were less likely to offer opinion, retweet, link or tweet about themselves or their everyday lives than women working for less "elite" media—which would support a professional socialization perspective—none of these differences was statistically significant.

KEYWORDS gender; new media; norms; transparency; Twitter

Introduction

From the telegraph to typewriters to the telephone to television, technological innovations have affected the norms and practice of journalism throughout history. Now comes Twitter. In half a decade, microblogging not only has become a major new means of public communication but it also has become a major tool used by journalists to do their jobs (Ahmad, 2010; Hermida, 2010). It is important, therefore, to understand how microblogs like Twitter are influencing journalistic norms. In a seminal study of journalistic norms, Tuchman (1972) accelerated such work by connecting norms explicitly to the legitimacy of journalism as a profession, that is, a vocation recognized by the public as worthy of its patronage. Since then, media scholars have tracked the importance of core journalistic norms such as objectivity and gatekeeping in the ever-evolving world of journalism. This article extends this work by considering whether gender plays a role in the use of Twitter by journalists and, specifically, about how that usage influences the journalists' existing norms and practices.

Twitter microblogs consist of short messages (no more than 140 characters) called tweets and are shared online with others who choose to be one's "followers." In a study of microblogging by mainstream journalists, Lasorsa et al. (2012) noted that microblogs consist of distinctive online features relevant to journalistic norms, including (1) expressing opinions, (2) conveying information verbatim from others, often without verifying it, and (3) providing hyperlinks and other intelligence about the origination of information. These

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first two features of new media contest the journalistic norms of *objectivity*: being nonpartisan and impartial—sticking closely to the facts (Schudson, 2001), and *gatekeeping*: maintaining a flow of credible information—obstructing rumors and lies (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009), while the third popular feature of blogs and microblogs—hyperlinking—encourages the journalistic norm of *transparency*: accounting for how news is made—being open and clear about information sources (Plaisance, 2007).

Before the advent of Twitter, Singer (2005) found that political reporters affiliated with mainstream news media tended to adapt their blogs to mainstream journalistic norms. Specifically, even in the highly participatory and interactive blogosphere, j-bloggers controlled the gates by continuing to bar non-professionals from contributing unverified information to the journalists' reports (see also Bruns, 2005; Carlson, 2007). Like other blog users, these j-bloggers were not averse to expressing opinions in their blogs and they frequently included hyperlinks, another common feature of blogging but, importantly, they linked mostly to their own host news organizations and to other traditional media, as opposed to non-professional sources of information (Singer, 2005). In other words, even when engaging in a participatory, interactive new form of mass communication like blogging, journalists mostly maintained their mainstream norms. As Singer (2005) put it, j-bloggers were "normalizing" blogging to fit their existing norms. Arant and Anderson (2001) and Cassidy (2006) also found that in the online setting the traditional routines remain strong. Because blogs and other new media foster these practices of expressing opinions, writing about one's job and personal life, and inviting non-professionals to participate in the production process, journalists working for mainstream news media who use these new media face the challenge of adopting or adapting these characteristic features of the new media to their existing professional norms (Hayes et al., 2007; Robinson, 2006, 2007; Singer, 2007).

Like blogs, microblogs characteristically feature the expression of opinions, the sharing of unchecked information from non-professionals, and the revelation of information about the person behind the tweet (Phillips, 2010; Phillips et al., 2009; Schudson and Anderson, 2008; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). In a study of journalists who use Twitter, Lasorsa et al. (2012) found that j-tweeters more freely express opinions and, to a lesser extent, they also share user-generated content with followers and they are more open than in their mainstream media stories about how they conduct their work. That study also found differences between what the authors regarded as "elite" news media and less "elite" ones. Specifically, j-tweeters who worked for national newspapers, national television news divisions, and national cable news networks were less inclined in their tweets than their counterparts working for other media to relinquish their gatekeeping role by sharing their stage with other news gatherers and commentators beyond their own news organizations, or to contribute transparency by providing information about their jobs, linking to external websites, or writing about their personal lives. Lasorsa et al. (2012) concluded that journalists working for larger, more well-known news media perhaps have more vested in the existing norms and have been more strongly socialized to accept them. Furthermore, the authors suggested that journalists working for lesser media perhaps feel the need to work harder to get the attention of others on Twitter, including engaging more in the characteristic features of microblogging that make it so popular.

While journalists in modern democracies generally profess to hold essentially the same norms, some differences across national borders have been observed. Phillips (2010), p. 6) observed that American news organizations are likely to attribute information to sources but that "a casual attitude towards attribution goes largely unquestioned in UK newsrooms". Likewise, in a comparison of leading newspapers in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Karlsson (2010) found that the United States' *New York Times* was the most transparent, the United Kingdom's *Guardian* was moderately so, and Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* was the least transparent. Regarding the gatekeeping norm, the Swedish paper was the most open to participation by non-professionals in the news production process, the UK paper was moderately open, and the American paper was the least open.

The current study seeks to build upon these earlier works on the effects of new media on journalism by considering whether one important characteristic of j-tweeters, their gender, makes a difference in their presence and activities on Twitter and, in particular, the extent to which they negotiate existing journalistic norms.

Gender Differences in Journalism

Journalism has been mostly a male profession. Male journalists have outnumbered their female colleagues, have been promoted more, have been given more desirable assignments, and even have been given better working conditions. As Barker-Plummer (2010, p. 150) observed, "Before, and for many years after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and its Title VII that outlawed discrimination on the basis of race and sex, overt discrimination against women in hiring, promotion, assignments and work conditions continued in journalism." In the 1970s, the women's movement had a positive effect on the presence of women in journalism. In 1971, women made up about 20 percent of the US journalistic workforce (Lafky, 1993). By 1982, the percentage of female journalists had risen to 34 percent. Since then, it has hovered between 33 and 40 percent (Bulkeley, 2004; Chambers et al., 2004; Rush, 2004). Rodgers et al. (2000) found that male reporters outnumbered female reporters in print media. Armstrong and Gao (2011) found that male bylines were more likely to appear than female bylines in national and regional news media, but not in local news media. Women also were found to be less likely than men to be in the position of the highest-level editors of traditional media (Thiel-Stern, 2006). Along with disparities in their numbers and in the positions they hold, female journalists often have been assigned to more human-interest or "softer" stories than the hard-hitting pieces that male journalists often write (Lynch, 1993).

In interviews with current and former female senior editors at national online news publications, Thiel-Stern (2006) learned that female journalists expected that online journalism would become a new paradigm with less gender disparities. Instead, it was found that new media only reflected the sexist hierarchies found in traditional media: women were no more likely to be in the position of the highest-level editors of online publications than they were in the traditional media. Likewise, any hope that the availability of online news media space would lead to gender equality in content also may be misplaced (Armstrong and Gao, 2011 Yun et al., 2007). Referring to Twitter, Armstrong and Gao said that

even the newest technology follows the path of other media content, emphasizing men more than women. Or, to put it another way, news topics involving men receive more emphasis than those involving women ... It appears that instead of creating new content to fit the new technology and audience, the news organizations are trying to fit the same content into a new dissemination tool, which may not be the best strategy. (2011, p. 501)

So, in old and new media alike, the story seems the same: journalism is a male-dominated business with more male-oriented stories being produced mostly by males.

Still, a substantial amount of news is gender neutral or female-oriented and a hefty minority of news is produced by female reporters. Do female and male journalists differ in their writing styles or other message characteristics? Rodgers and Thorson (2003) found that at large newspapers female and male reporters show similar reporting patterns. However, differences emerged among those working for smaller newspapers. The authors concluded that this was due to the socialization process, which is likely to be stronger at larger news organizations and among the more experienced journalists working at them. As Armstrong and Gao (2011, p. 502) put it, "Possibly ... there were stronger socialization pressures at larger newspapers to promote sameness in journalistic routines, with female and male reporters showing more similar reporting patterns to conform to the male-dominated mechanism." Likewise, Liebler and Smith (1997) found that when men and women wrote about the same topic that their stories appeared very similar. The authors maintained that this was due to females being socialized into masculine definitions of newsworthiness. As Liebler and Smith (1997, p. 65) said, "Even if women have power over their stories, their work looks much like that of their male counterparts."

Despite these similarities in the reports of female and male journalists, differences have been observed in their use of sources. Rodgers and Thorson (2003) found that female reporters were more likely than their male colleagues to use female and minority sources; furthermore, these differences were greater at smaller newspapers, supporting a socialization perspective. Likewise, Zeldes and Fico (2005, 2007) found that female television reporters were more likely than their male counterparts to use female and minority sources. Additionally, Armstrong (2004) found that female journalists were more likely to use female sources.

The current study analyzes how journalists use a relatively new social medium, microblogging, and how that use differs by gender. The journalists' overall presence on Twitter is examined: how long have they used Twitter and how many tweets have they sent; how many followers do they have and how many Twitter users they follow; on how many theme lists do they appear (lists of tweeters interested in a particular topic). Also examined are the activities in which the journalists engage. Twitter usage can enlighten us about how journalists work, their willingness to adopt new means of communication that can enhance their work, the extent to which they impose traditional journalistic norms and practices on their use of this new medium, and the extent to which they embrace some of the less norm-based features of new social media like Twitter.

While information is beginning to emerge regarding gender differences among tweeters generally—Heil and Piskorski (2009) found that men and women tweeted at the same rate but that men had 15 percent more followers than women—to this point gender differences in female and male journalists' tweets have remained essentially unexplored. For this reason, a series of research questions is addressed about differences between male and female j-tweeters in their microblogging presence and activities.

Research Questions

- RQ1:** Do female and male journalists differ in their presence on Twitter?
- RQ2:** Do female and male journalists differ in the topics of their tweets?
- RQ3:** Do female and male journalists differ in their expression of opinions on Twitter?
- RQ4:** Do female and male journalists differ in the extent to which they uphold the gatekeeping process on Twitter?
- RQ5:** Do female and male journalists differ in the extent to which they contribute to transparency in their tweets?
- RQ6:** Do female journalists working for "elite" news organizations differ from other female journalists in their microblogging activities?

Method

A listing of the 500 journalists from around the world with the most Twitter followers was obtained from the developers of *Muck Rack* (see muckrack.com). Founded in 2009, *Muck Rack* has become one of the most prominent sites for aggregating the tweets of professional journalists. Its database of thousands of journalists who use Twitter organizes their professional Twitter accounts by their news organizations and beats (Seward, 2009). While not representative of all journalists on Twitter, it nevertheless represents perhaps the most comprehensive collection available.

The news organization with which journalists are affiliated is identified on each journalist's Twitter home page. For example, Twitter.com/lucywaverman is the home page of columnist Lucy Waverman of Canada's *Globe & Mail* national newspaper. News organizations were categorized as follows: (1) national broadcast (e.g., BBC News); (2) national newspaper (e.g., *The Guardian*); (3) national radio (e.g., National Public Radio); (4) national cable (e.g., CNN); (5) national magazine (e.g., *The Spectator*); (6) wire service (e.g., Reuters); (7) online website (e.g., *Slate*); (8) local newspaper (e.g., *Chicago Tribune*); and (9) other media.

To describe the Twitter presence of each journalist, these six characteristics were noted: (1) the number of Twitter users the journalist was *following*; (2) the number of Twitter users following the journalist (*followers*); (3) the number of user-generated theme lists on which the journalist appeared; (4) the total number of tweets the journalist had ever sent; (5) the journalists' *longevity* on Twitter; and (6) the journalist's *productivity* on Twitter. Data on the first four variables are given on each journalist's Twitter home page. A journalist's longevity on Twitter was obtained from the website Myweet16.com, which returns the first 16 tweets of any Twitter user, along with their transmission dates. Using the date of the first tweet posted, the duration in days that each journalist had been on Twitter was calculated. To indicate a journalist's productivity, the average number of tweets was calculated by dividing the journalist's total number of tweets by the journalist's longevity.

For each journalist, up to their first 10 tweets posted each day were coded, starting at 12 a.m. (midnight their time) and ending at 11:59 p.m., for two weeks, starting on October 5, 2009, and ending on October 18. If a journalist posted fewer than 10 tweets in a given day then those they did post that day, if any, were coded. Over the two-week period, the journalists sent a total of 22,248 tweets. The analysis was limited to 10 tweets

per day in order to conserve resources. While it would have been possible to choose 10 tweets randomly from each journalist's daily output, it was decided to analyze a block of sequential tweets because of the nature of Twitter. Since a tweet is restricted to a very short message, it is commonplace to send a series of tweets together, one tweet building on previous ones. In other words, tweets tend to be much less independent of each other than most media messages, such as news stories, which are meant to stand on their own. Because the first tweet posted after midnight might relate to tweets sent before midnight, coders were instructed to read earlier tweets, if necessary, to understand the tweet to be coded. Analyzing the first 10 tweets daily has an additional value. It was observed in pre-testing that coders made fewer mistakes trying to locate the correct tweets to code when this simpler approach was used, compared to alternative coding schemes.

To identify the *topics* of each journalist's tweets, coders categorized the primary topic of each tweet. Tweets were coded into one of the following categories commonly used to analyze news content: (1) politics and government; (2) technology and science; (3) economy and business; (4) entertainment and celebrities; (5) sports; (6) nature and the environment (including weather); (7) social welfare (including health care and education); (8) tweets that deal only with the journalist's personal life; and (9) tweets that deal with some other unspecified topic.

To find the extent to which the journalists expressed personal opinions, each tweet was coded for its primary purpose, whether to convey information, seek information, or convey opinion. Tweets which were judged as primarily conveying opinion were labeled as cases of *major opining*. In addition, tweets which did not primarily opine but instead primarily conveyed information were coded for whether they nonetheless contained an element of opinion. Such tweets were labeled as *minor opining*.

To recognize the extent to which journalists who microblog share their gatekeeping role by including postings from others in their microblogging, each tweet was coded for whether or not it was a "retweet," a special type of tweet consisting of the verbatim posting of another tweeter's message, plus the identification of the original source. Therefore, "retweeting is an indication of a journalist's 'opening the gates' to allow others to participate in the news production process" (Lasorsa et al., 2012, p. 26).

To determine the extent to which journalists who microblog provide information that contributes to the transparency of the news production process, four microblog activities were considered, listed here in the order in which they contribute directly to such accountability. Since transparency refers to the inclusion of information about the veracity of a message, including how observations are made by the reporter, how sources are obtained and how facts are checked (Phillips, 2010), tweets were coded for whether they primarily conveyed information about the journalist's job (but excluding self-promotion), what might be called *job talking*. Information that is primarily about the journalist's job might well figure directly into the journalist's transparency. Excluded here are tweets that primarily self-promote, that is, those tweets which mainly publicize a story the journalist produced or another story from the journalist's news organization. Some journalists heavily self-promote on Twitter. Indeed, Twitter can be an effective way to market one's work, which helps explain its overall popularity among journalists. Such tweets, however, do not advance transparency in any meaningful way, so self-promoting tweets were excluded from "job talking."

A second way that microblogs might contribute to transparency is through *linking* to external websites (Singer, 2005). Each tweet was coded for whether or not it contained

a hyperlink to another website. If so, the link was coded for the type of external website to which the tweet linked: (1) the journalist's own news organization; (2) another news medium; (3) an outside blog, or (4) another link. Linking, and the nature of the link in terms of whether it links to a mainstream news medium or to some other source, can provide an indication of transparency (Singer, 2005).

As noted above, tweets were coded for their primary topic (e.g., politics and government). Given that the authors of these tweets are journalists, their tweets often are about *news* topics. However, the topic of some tweets is only the journalist's personal life. Such *personalizing* tweets may contain information about the journalist's job and therefore also might play a part in providing transparency. Furthermore, even non-job-related information about the journalist's personal life can contribute to transparency (Phillips, 2010).

Finally, another popular use of Twitter is so-called *lifecasting*, conveying mundane information about one's everyday life (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Therefore, tweets were coded for those which primarily convey information about the journalist's everyday life, but not about their job (which were coded as "job talking"). Even though they do not deal with the journalist's job, these lifecasting tweets to some extent also might promote transparency by conveying other types of personal information that shed light on the journalist behind the news (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

Coders were students in an undergraduate mass communication theory course who received course credit for their work. These 60 coders engaged in extensive practice sessions that involved all coders coding the same tweets both as class exercises and homework assignments, which then were discussed at length in class. In addition, six graduate students engaged in supplemental coding to fill gaps left by the undergraduate coders. Intercoder reliability was determined by selecting a subset of 488 pairs of tweets that were independently coded by two different coders. Cohen's kappa was used to estimate intercoder reliability (Cohen, 1968). This statistic is a more conservative measure of reliability than some other measures, including percent of agreement, because it does not give credit for chance agreement. Thus, a kappa value of 0.80 represents very high intercoder reliability and a value of 0.60 represents acceptable intercoder reliability (Viera and Garrett, 2005). The reliability estimates for the variables used in the analyses are: discussing, 0.86; job talking, 0.71; lifecasting, 0.79; linking, 0.66; link site, 0.61; medium, 0.82; minor opining, 0.67; major opining, 0.77; retweeting, 0.80, and topic (which includes personalizing), 0.62.

Results

One-third of the most popular journalists on Twitter (in terms of number of followers) were women ($N = 164$), which reflects their proportion in newsrooms generally (Rush, 2004). Among these popular j-tweeters, gender made remarkably little difference in the mass medium with which they were affiliated. The only notable difference was in the slightly larger percentage of female reporters working for local newspapers, but even that difference was statistically insignificant (see Table 1).

Nor did the female and male journalists differ much in any indicators of their presence on Twitter (RQ1). While male journalists on average were followed by more Twitter users, were included on more theme lists, followed more Twitter users, posted

TABLE 1
News media affiliations of male and female journalists on Twitter

Medium	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
TV broadcast			
N	36	18	54
%	10.8	11.0	10.9
National newspaper			
N	89	46	135
%	26.7	28.0	27.2
National radio			
N	8	3	11
%	2.4	1.8	2.2
National cable TV			
N	32	17	49
%	9.6	10.4	9.9
National magazine			
N	54	22	76
%	16.2	13.4	15.3
Wire service			
N	7	3	10
%	2.1	1.8	2.0
Online website			
N	35	12	47
%	10.5	7.3	9.5
Local newspaper			
N	65	41	106
%	19.5	25.0	21.3
Other medium			
N	7	2	9
%	2.1	1.2	1.8
Total	333	164	497
N	100.0	100.0	100.0
%			

None of these differences is statistically significant.

more tweets, used Twitter longer, and were more productive (in terms of their daily output of tweets defined by the total number of tweets posted divided by how long in days they had been using Twitter), all of these differences were meager and none of them reached statistical significance (see Table 2).

Furthermore, female and male journalists differed little in the topics about which they tweeted, with two notable exceptions (RQ2). One, the female journalists tweeted about sports far less than did their male counterparts. Given that male reporters cover sports much more than female reporters, and given that men generally have professed more interest than women in sports (Hallmark and Armstrong, 1999), this first difference is not surprising. More intriguing is the difference between female and male reporters when the topic of the tweet was the tweeter's own personal life. Such "personalizing" tweets were significantly more likely to have been posted by a female journalist than a male journalist. As with sports tweets, this result also may be related to the types of stories female reporters tend to cover. Male reporters have been found to write more about "hard" news topics while female reporters write more about "soft" news topics (Lynch,

TABLE 2
t-Test of differences in Twitter presence of male and female reporters

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t-Value
Following	Male	327	1240.27	4044.90	223.68	486	1.173
	Female	161	858.74	1163.96	91.73		
Followers	Male	327	58,779.24	253,551.94	14,021.45	486	0.868
	Female	161	38,950.78	200,342.54	15,789.20		
Listed	Male	327	508.57	1122.62	62.08	486	0.992
	Female	161	410.63	1064.02	83.86		
Tweets	Male	326	3062.30	3700.22	204.94	485	1.499
	Female	161	2536.55	3518.04	277.26		
Longevity	Male	323	597.29	286.42	15.94	484	0.719
	Female	163	578.37	246.68	19.32		
Productivity	Male	323	6.6220	10.32	0.574	482	1.365
	Female	161	5.2148	11.38	0.897		

None of these differences is statistically significant.

1993). Here, it was found that, beside their personal lives, female reporters tended to write more about entertainment, celebrities and social issues, while male reporters wrote more about politics, technology, science and business—but these differences were modest and not statistically significant (see Table 3). It is tempting to suggest that perhaps those covering softer news topics are more willing to allow the public to observe more about their work and themselves than are those who cover more hard-hitting stories because those who cover more serious stories feel the need to be more guarded about the stories they cover in order to protect themselves from potentially more serious challenges to their work but this possible explanation for why female j-tweeters are more transparent than their male counterparts is mere speculation at this point.

TABLE 3
t-Test of differences in Twitter topics of male and female reporters

Topic	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t-Value
Politics and government	Male	290	7.76	14.53	0.85	427	1.186
	Female	139	6.02	13.40	1.14		
Technology and science	Male	290	7.02	13.81	0.81	427	0.767
	Female	139	5.96	12.46	1.06		
Economy and business	Male	290	5.02	9.53	0.56	427	0.296
	Female	139	4.74	8.74	0.74		
Entertainment and celebrities	Male	290	7.09	12.83	0.75	427	-0.281
	Female	139	7.48	14.52	1.23		
Sports	Male	290	8.86	21.25	1.25	427	4.071***
	Female	139	1.39	5.80	0.49		
Nature and environment	Male	290	1.38	5.52	0.32	427	0.780
	Female	139	1.00	2.21	0.19		
Social welfare	Male	290	2.58	6.82	0.40	427	-0.786
	Female	139	3.20	9.09	0.77		
Personal life	Male	290	8.69	12.13	0.71	427	-3.426**
	Female	139	13.90	19.08	1.62		
Other	Male	290	5.02	8.39	0.49	427	0.533
Topic	Female	139	4.57	7.89	0.67		

** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

To explore these ideas further, as well as whether women and men differ in the extent to which their microblogging behavior diverges from other norms of mainstream news media, the journalists' microblogging activities were examined in detail. It was found that female and male j-tweeters did not differ much in the extent to which they were nonpartisan or impartial, as measured by how much they expressed opinions in their tweets (RQ3). Recall that "major opining" occurred when a tweet primarily was an expression of opinion (as opposed to merely conveying information); "minor opining" occurred when a tweet was primarily conveying information but it also contained an element of opinion. It was found that neither major nor minor opining was affected by gender. Nor were female j-tweeters more likely to relax their gatekeeping role by retweeting verbatim the tweets of others (RQ4). So, regarding the major norms of objectivity and gatekeeping, gender made little difference. However, female journalists were found to provide significantly greater transparency in their tweets (RQ5). Besides posting more "personalizing" tweets than their male counterparts, as noted earlier, the female journalists also tweeted more about their jobs, they tweeted more mundane information about their everyday lives ("lifecasting"), and they linked more to external websites. These findings suggest that female journalists may be moving the profession toward greater transparency than are their male counterparts (see Table 4).

At the same time, however, these gender-related tendencies may be tempered by the professional socialization process. As noted earlier, journalists are socialized in classrooms and newsrooms to specific professional norms, including objectivity, gatekeeping and transparency. If the socialization process affects female journalists' adherence to these norms then we would expect those female journalists affiliated with larger, more prestigious, national news organizations to opine less, to retweet less, and to tweet less in ways that indicate transparency. To test this idea (RQ6), female journalists affiliated with national newspapers, the news divisions of the major television broadcasters, and the cable television news channels ($N = 71$) were roughly grouped together as "elite" news media, and they were compared to those working for the other news outlets ($N = 68$). The results, though, were not conclusive. The female journalists working for national news

TABLE 4
t-Test of differences in microblog activities of male and female reporters

	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	SEM	df	<i>t</i> -Value
Major opining	Male	290	0.2664	0.19930	0.01170	427	0.868
	Female	139	0.2486	0.19818	0.01681		
Minor opining	Male	290	0.2686	0.20051	0.01177	427	0.827
	Female	139	0.2515	0.20335	0.01725		
Retweeting	Male	290	0.1264	0.15342	0.00901	427	-0.221
	Female	139	0.1300	0.16492	0.01399		
Job talking	Male	290	0.0804	0.14148	0.00831	427	-1.968*
	Female	139	0.1115	0.17492	0.01484		
Linking	Male	290	0.5223	0.27892	0.01638	427	-2.011***
	Female	139	0.5807	0.28711	0.02435		
Personalizing	Male	290	0.1563	0.16863	0.00990	427	-5.793***
	Female	139	0.2734	0.24318	0.02063		
Lifecasting	Male	290	0.1252	0.14708	0.00864	427	-3.436**
	Female	139	0.1839	0.19897	0.01688		

* $p = 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

media opined less, suggesting closer adherence to the objectivity norm, but there was no difference in retweeting between them and their counterparts working for the less "elite" media, indicating no difference in adherence to the gatekeeping norm. In addition, there was no difference in the amount of "job talking" tweets, suggesting a similarity in their transparency. Regarding the other indicators of transparency, the less "elite" journalists wrote more personalizing and lifecasting messages but they linked less to external websites. Overall, then, the notion that the female journalists who worked for the national media would be more professionally socialized to mainstream journalistic norms was inconclusive (see Table 5).

Discussion

Even though men and women differ physically, there has been little reason to expect female and male journalists to perform their jobs differently. After all, both genders are trained to adopt long-standing professional norms. Thus, while individual differences might influence a journalist's work, such differences tend to be placed in check by this socialization process (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Even in the case of new and evolving mass media like blogs and microblogs, the few studies which have been conducted so far indicate that journalists mostly have "normalized" these new media, that is, rather than adopt characteristics of new media that contest existing norms and practices journalists instead tend to adapt new media to these professional standards. Therefore, it is not surprising that the female and male j-tweeters studied here differed little in their Twitter presence, the topics of their tweets, and the extent to which they engaged in two characteristic microblogging activities that contest major journalistic norms and practices: (1) expressing opinions (*objectivity*) and (2) admitting non-professionals to participate in the news production process (*gatekeeping*). What is surprising is that regarding a third important journalistic norm—*transparency*—female journalists provided significantly more openness and accountability in their tweets than did their male counterparts. As mentioned earlier, this might be related at least partly to the long-standing practice of

TABLE 5
t-Test of differences in microblog activities of elite and non-elite female reporters

Microblog activity	Media status	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t-Value
Major opining	Non-elite	68	0.2848	0.209430	0.02540	137	2.136*
	Elite	71	0.2139	0.18151	0.02154		
Minor opining	Non-elite	68	0.2907	0.21839	0.02648	137	2.258*
	Elite	71	0.2139	0.18151	0.02154		
Retweeting	Non-elite	68	0.1571	0.16547	0.02007	137	1.920
	Elite	71	0.1039	0.16128	0.01914		
Job talking	Non-elite	68	0.1047	0.15340	0.01860	137	-0.444
	Elite	71	0.1179	0.19419	0.02305		
Linking	Non-elite	68	0.6409	0.23922	0.02901	137	2.463**
	Elite	71	0.5230	0.31755	0.03769		
Personalizing	Non-elite	68	0.3166	0.25878	0.03138	137	2.073*
	Elite	71	0.2320	0.22123	0.02626		
Lifecasting	Non-elite	68	0.2403	0.23873	0.02895	137	3.392***
	Elite	71	0.1299	0.13210	0.01568		

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

assigning "hard" versus "soft" news stories based on gender (Lynch, 1993). Perhaps if this practice weakens so will the difference in transparency between male and female reporters. But, again, this is mere speculation. Regardless of its cause, the rather puzzling finding that female journalists are more transparent in their tweets than their male counterparts is important because, as also mentioned earlier, transparency is emerging as a critical distinguishing feature of news media in the online environment. The mainstream news media traditionally have claimed to focus on the production of fair and accurate news stories, an admittedly costly process. Their audiences for many years showed a willingness to pay for credible news, with facts and sources presumably checked, and information presumably verified. The offline world of journalism, however, is not the same as the online world, where speed is more likely to trump accuracy (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 1999). Phillips (2010), for example, concluded that bloggers view truth as a work in progress, willing to publish rumor and then to wait for the audience to react, trusting that the interactivity of the Web quickly enough will deliver its own corrective. However, Phillips maintained, if the public is to act as a corrective then it is imperative that it be aware of where the information originated. As Singer (2007, p. 86) put it, "What truth is to journalists, transparency is to bloggers." Much the same can be said of microbloggers. Whether in the blogosphere, twitterverse or some other online environment where speed may supersede the checking of sources and the verification of facts, accuracy and fairness reside in transparency (Blood, 2002). Unfortunately, study after study has found that mainstream news websites rarely link to outside sources (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Phillips, 2010; Quandt, 2008; Redden and Witschge, 2009; Singer, 2005), and other analyses consistently have found that the practice of taking information from other news outlets without attribution is prevalent (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Messner and DiStaso, 2008; Phillips, 2010).

There was a time when exclusive news lasted days before other media were able to retransmit it, and not long ago exclusive news lasted a full day before it could be appropriated by other media outlets. In today's online world, however, other media have the ability to lift exclusive material such as quotes and case histories within minutes of publication (Phillips, 2010). This creates a challenge because for-profit news organizations need a financial incentive to investigate the events of the day. Yet, if reputable news media do not continue to scoop the competition with valuable exclusives, and if online media neglect transparency, failing to inform readers how the news was obtained, then this key distinction differentiating commercial news media begins to vanish.

Near the start of the twenty-first century, Bourdieu (2005) identified a critical problem with journalism as it is practiced today. His field theory explains how a field (e.g., journalism, politics) consists of entities (e.g., news organizations, politicians) whose vitality is contingent upon their ability to differentiate themselves from other entities in the field. "To exist in a field," Bourdieu (2005, pp. 39–40) said, "is to differentiate oneself. It can be said of an intellectual that he or she ... exists by virtue of difference from other intellectuals. Falling into undifferentiatedness ... means losing existence." In journalism, Bourdieu (2005, p. 44) said, differentiation is "usually judged by access to news, the 'scoop,' exclusive information and also distinctive rarity, 'big names' and so on." The problem, paradoxically, is that commercial competition encourages news outlets to copy one another in order to reach the largest possible audience. When in the late twentieth century new communication technologies began to produce lower costs for entry into news production, many hoped the result would be more and different news outlets.

However, competition led to even greater consolidation. Despite rising numbers of news organizations, they mostly entice the same audiences with the same stories. Thus, enigmatically, competition has been undermining the very differentiation that is needed.

Phillips (2010, p. 374) suggested that the solution to the problem is "a greater commitment to transparency so that citizens are more easily able to trace information to its source." She observed that original reporting not only serves the purposes of a healthy democracy but that it "may also have an important role in maintaining the diversity of news outlets in the longer term." Transparency allows news organizations to benefit from differentiating themselves through their original reporting. However, this differentiation only takes place when other news organizations refrain from lifting such reporting without attribution. Rigorously maintaining standards of transparency could pave the way to a healthier field.

Given the growing importance of media transparency, the surprising finding that gender plays a role in it certainly is worth additional investigation. Much could be learned by interviewing j-tweeters to probe more directly their notions of media transparency. It is also clear that journalists who use Twitter are adjusting their traditional norms and practices to bring them into closer alignment with the characteristic features of this new medium. About a quarter of their tweets contain opinions, about an eighth consist of verbatim repostings of others' messages, and more than half of their tweets contain at least one of four indicators of transparency. This raises the question whether the opining, stage-sharing and transparency journalists exhibit on Twitter are affecting their norms and practices in their other journalistic products. Future study also should attempt to address limitations of this study. J-tweeters with the most followers were studied here. It is unlikely that they are typical of all j-tweeters. A more representative sample of j-tweeters ideally would include a range of journalists beyond those studied here. The definition of journalism itself is evolving and such a sample perhaps would include individuals who may not necessarily be considered professional journalists but whose contributions nevertheless contribute to news conversations in digital formats such as Twitter.

Despite its limitations, this large-scale analysis of more than 20,000 tweets indicates that the tendency of journalists to "normalize" new media, that is, to adapt them to the mainstream media's existing norms and practices, may be negotiated by female journalists' greater transparency, compared to their male counterparts.

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Dominic Lasorsa, University of Texas at Austin, Journalism School, 1 University Station, A1000, Austin, TX 78712, USA. E-mail: lasorsa@mail.utexas.edu