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A discourse analysis of Gender Perceptions, Twitter, the 2018 Progressive Conservative Leadership Race, and the 2018 Provincial Election

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A discourse analysis of Gender Perceptions, Twitter,
the 2018 Progressive Conservative Leadership Race, and the 2018 Provincial Election

by

Mary E. Chamberlain

Major Research Project

Submitted to the Department of Social Justice and Community Engagement in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for

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Abstract

The research seeks to bring awareness to how online discourse on Twitter can contribute to the reinforcement of unequal power relations against female electoral candidates. This project is a discourse analysis of gender perceptions of the 2018 Progressive Conservative Leadership Race and the 2018 provincial election as portrayed on Twitter. Using understandings of Liberal Feminism and Intersectionality, this project demonstrates the struggle of gender discrimination against women in political life and attempts to recognize the efforts of women attempting to shatter the glass ceiling. The findings suggest female candidates experienced Twitter as a gendered and bullying platform, while male candidates were shown an underlying value for “maleness.” The purpose of the study was to raise awareness of the realities facing female candidates and politicians who are women both on and off Twitter. This research added to the discussion of women in politics, media, and gender.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to have had the experience to complete my Master of Arts education at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Brantford, Ontario. I have always been a feminist and a social justice advocate, but it was during my Undergraduate years at Fanshawe College where I became interested in women rights in education and political leadership. I was happy to carry forward with my research interests and love for women's advocacy in political life at Laurier. It was with the help and care of my Research Advisor, Dr. Tarah Brookfield, and Second Reader, Dr. Sue Ferguson that I have finished my Major Research Project with excellence. I am especially blessed to have had the opportunity to meet Andrea Horwath, with Dr. Tarah Brookfield, in Brantford, this past May as this was an empowering day for my growth as a researcher. It is also with the support and love of my family, and close friends that I could seek out hope through this journey. I will forever be thankful for this experience, and when I think back at my time at Laurier, I will reminisce about this accomplishment and all the joy I experienced during my Master of Arts.

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Introduction

“Although we weren’t able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it’s got about 18 million cracks in it — and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time.”

Hillary Clinton’s 2008 glass ceiling quote empowers many who hope to see a change for women in political life. It also effectively acknowledges that historically, political candidates who are women, are treated differently because of their gender (Finneman, 2015). Voters’ perceptions of gender often determine if a political candidate is qualified for the role, which in turn can affect the success of their candidacy (Dolan, 2014). Voters may assume, for example, that women have a particular set of personal skills and policy interests or do not belong in non-traditional careers, such as politics. These gender stereotypes damage “women’s credibility and chances for electoral success,” as well as affect women’s willingness to participate in politics and also how they envision themselves as political representatives (Dolan, p. 188). According to Blackley (2016), the underrepresentation of women in political life has been a longstanding issue. Prior to the 2018 election, women represented 33% of seats at Queens Park and now of the 124 ridings, 49 or 39.5% will be represented by women under the new Doug Ford government (“Newly-elected MPPs,” 2018; Rushowy, 2018). Additionally, after the 2018 provincial election, Ontario’s Progressive Conservative (PC) party now includes 25 out of 76 MPPs that are women; these statistics show improvements, but still, women’s representation remains low in Ontario politics (Rushowy, 2018). Today, women represent only 18% of mayors in Ontario and 26% of membership in the House of Commons (Blackley, 2016). Overall, the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics informs the bias toward female candidates which affects public perceptions of their ability and electoral outcomes (McGregor and Mourão, 2016).

To deepen our understanding of this phenomenon, this Major Research Paper (MRP) investigated perceptions of gender during two instances of political campaigning in Ontario during the first half of 2018: the PC leadership race and the provincial election. Using feminist theory and discourse analysis, I recorded and compared the language of Twitter users and how they express support for, neutrality, and/or hostility toward male and female candidates. My research focuses on the PC party. Historically this party has not prioritized diversity among its candidates, and amongst the three main parties that contested the provincial election. The research is to explore how voter perceptions of candidates on Twitter reflected gender stereotypes. Additionally, the MRP tested if social media interactions on Twitter had predictors for success rates of male and female electoral candidates.

This study is shaped by the following three research questions:

- 1) Do Ontario voters “evaluate women candidates as women first, punishing them at the polls if they do not fit traditional gendered expectations, or are voters able to see these candidates as more than just women?” (Dolan, p. 2-3)
- 2) How does the political culture of Twitter represent the gender of male-candidates in the 2018 PC leadership race and the 2018 provincial election?
- 3) How closely does the Twitter commenter engagement reflect the election results?

This study is shaped by the following hypothesis:

In addition to partisan tensions, female candidates in the 2018 provincial election will face more bullying and harassment online than male candidates face because of significant gender bias.

In the hypothesis mentioned above, the partisan tensions refers to the typical conflict between parties, as well as the current political climate in which the elect of alt-right and socially

conservative candidates in Canada and United States have led to amplified critiques of leftist, social justice, and more community focused initiatives and policy found in the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party leaders take on, in comparison to the more right, business driven PC party leader. The definition of bullying, given the context of this project, considered the use of 'you' statements and capitalization in replies, staying aware of reply frequency (whether published by the same Twitter user or not), attacks that were instigating, angry, or more generally negative feeling in tone that was personal to the candidate. This research contributed to understandings of why women continue to face rejection as political candidates. It also adds to the discussion of women in politics, media, and gender.

This project demonstrated the struggle of gendered discrimination against women in political life and seeks recognition for the women still working to shatter the glass ceiling. This project is relative to the idea of the glass ceiling because the events analyzed via Twitter had similar consequences for women in the PC leadership race and the provincial election.

Theory

To speak to feminism more broadly, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy claims that, "Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms" (Haslanger, Tuana, O'Connor, 2012). There is a diverse range of feminist ideology, but the current study relies upon the theoretical framework of liberal feminism. There are barriers for women to gain access to the higher echelons of political life as women are still limited by a gendered narrative that discourages their entry into non-traditional fields of work. Liberal feminism is the theory that believes equality exists when laws and institutional policy validate women as equal to men. Institutional law and policy that is respective of affirmative action initiatives are necessary to validate women's voices in the

legislature, in hopes of attaining 'gender fair' working conditions for women in politics – including in the media and online spheres of politics.

The critical thinkers of liberal feminism include John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858). John was a philosopher that made contributions to subjects of philosophy, economics, political theory, and women's liberation (Mill, John Stuart, 2016). In the book, *The Subjection of Women*, Mill advocated for the liberty of women. Mill identified the existing social relations that deny liberty and legal inclusion based on sex in the book by stating:

That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other (Rossi, p. 125, 1970).

Mill fought for women's rights while he was in parliament. He believed that women were entitled to political representation as well, on the same terms with men (Eisenstein, 1981). Overall, he believed the legal subjection of women to be unjust and inappropriate.

Harriet was interested in work about marriage, women's education, ethics, religion, and the arts (Mill, Harriet Taylor, 2016). In *Enfranchisement of Women* she advocated, “the enfranchisement of women; their admission, in law and in fact, to equality in all rights, political, civil, and social, with male citizens of the community” (Rossi, p. 93, 1970). The struggle persisted as women were thought to have solely belonged to the private sphere of the family (Held, 1982). She saw this journey as a political movement that would require perseverance and that proposed that advocacy in this domain would not only be for women but by women. Both John and Harriet argued that until women attained full citizenship, equality would not exist (Eisenstein, 1981). Liberal feminism is necessary to attain equal rights and opportunities for women; so that the work of women is recognized and equally respected as that of men.

Liberal feminism can be critiqued from the perspective of intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality in 1989. The theory of intersectionality advanced the idea that ability, racial, sexual, and class oppressions are interlocking systems of complex social relations (Kerner, 2017). One's individual experience of oppression relies on the complex social relations or intersections by which distinctly associated. Crenshaw (1991) highlighted the inequity and invisibility of women of colour. The problem is that liberal feminism assumes the issues of white, middle class women to be the issues faced by all women (Johnson Lewis, 2017). However, the complex social relations that women of colour face are not necessarily represented by liberal feminism.

I utilized an intersectional lens to highlight exclusion within the case-study of this project. As said by Panagopoulos et al. (2011), few women and even fewer women of minority groups have been welcome to engage in male-dominated fields such as politics. Ashe (2017) states that “women have never held more than 25 percent of the world’s total legislative seats” (p. 597). I question what percentage of these women were racialized, lived with disabilities, were not cisgender, and were from minority groups? Because of candidate privilege and lack of diversity in the PC party, utilizing the theory of intersectionality was challenging. Though, as I considered intersectionality and the case, socio-economic class was the most relevant to this project. I considered class to include ideas around eliteness, wealth, and education for the political candidates. Further work is needed in regard to exclusion and success in Canadian politics.

Literature Review

Women’s Early Political Activism

“What the men expected, I suppose,” she said to me, “was a terrible old-fashioned house-cleaning, in the kind of a rumpus their mothers used to make in the spring just about the time the

first robin came —carpets up, dust in every room, all the family in flight. I clean house with a vacuum cleaner, don't you? My husband hardly knows the cleaning's going on. But it is. That's the way it seems to me women are breaking into politics. A room at a time" (Freeman, 2000, p. 1).

Freeman (2000) emphasized that politics for women did not commence with the vote but with local grassroots movements and committees. It was here the conversation about suffrage began. Women received the vote after they proved themselves as effective political changemakers at the local level. At the end of the 19th-century, most women were merely observers of legislative, political activity, as women were to stay out of the political light. While some women advocated for causes like abolitionism or supported trade unions, most women expressed their political beliefs away from the public eye through letters to newspapers and private conversations. At this time married women had few to no property rights, no political rights, and little access to higher education. Women's primary focus was required to be family. Nonetheless, many women did work and were politically active. The late 19th century had many women advocating for political rights and representation. Freeman's work establishes the context of the current project on gender perceptions of women in politics. She emphasized how historically engrained biases against women as political actors were and how women's voices in politics are less heard than men's, in the fight for social change.

The book by Holmes, *Working for the Common Good: Canadian Women Politicians* recognizes three generations of Canadian female elected officials (2017). The first woman elected to the House of Commons was Agnes MacPhail, a feminist who sought women's equality as a fundamental human right, as she explained, "only by working for genuine social and economic democracy...might greater equity be achieved" (Holmes, p. 160). Her success in parliament (1921-1940) was a rarity. Subsequent women elected to politics were the wives of previously elected men. For men to support women, the woman candidate would have had

family members of high social status, as the woman's family name would have implied political legitimacy to politicians and voters (Freeman, 2000). Holmes's work is valuable for this study because it provides evidence of the struggle women undertake to attain leadership in Canadian politics.

The work by Finneman (2015), *Press Portrayals of Women Politicians, 1870s-2000s: From "Lunatic" Woodhull to "Polarizing" Palin* contextualizes the history of women candidates in the United States. Finneman believed that the social, economic, cultural, and gender structures socialize individuals as well as inform their decisions. This is important because, in the history of the press and women in politics, women have faced and continue to face sexist media coverage. Finneman explains, "the trivialization of women candidates throughout history has resulted in the absence of widespread political knowledge about the impressive and capable women who have lived political lives" (p. 3). Gendered discursive strategies in the press have delegitimized candidates who are women and consequentially left women at a disadvantage in politics. The press has served as a "conservative defender" (p. 176), protecting the status quo, especially concerning gender roles and norms. Finneman's work is a longitudinal and contextual study to gain insight into media coverage of historical women in political life. The relevance of this study lies in the evidence it provides for the fact that media is gendered and biased toward women in politics.

Sangster's work, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of Women and the Vote in Canada* explains that suffragists believed that the vote was a fundamental human right and an agent of social change (2018). Her work is influential for this project because it validates the need for social change for women so that women can achieve equality and equal respect for their work in politics. She points out that social movements were not uniform nor socially cohesive,

noting that some suffragists were both socialists and liberals too. Dr. Emily Stowe, a feminist and women's suffrage activist once explained that "as educated citizens and moral and loving women, we desire to be placed in the position to impress directly our thoughts on our nation. The invidious distinction of sex is an arbitrary and arterial one, having no foundation in reason or common sense" (Sangster, p. 78). Sangster validated the need to release stereotypes and biases imposed on women based on superstitions concerning 'women's roles.' There is a need to review a history of women in politics because we cannot progress forward until we acknowledge and learn from the past.

Contemporary Conditions for Women in Politics

Women have made progress in breaking down the walls of sex discrimination. Dolan's "*When Does Gender Matter?*" (2014) concerns gender perceptions and conditions for women in political life in the United States. She questioned if gendered attitudes about women in political roles have an impact on their candidacies. Dolan wrote that reliance of the public on stereotypes about women's traits and abilities could hurt female candidates at the polls. As Dolan explains, "women experience stereotyping or sexism at some point in their candidacies" (p. 3). Even though Dolan deems the presence of women in government beneficial – with more women involved in government the government operates better including the outputs they provide – it is still the case that "public attitudes about whether politics is an appropriate pursuit for women have been at the heart of women's opportunities since the founding of our nation" (p. 19). Women's representation in government is vital to the legislature because women are affected by issues differently and may place greater emphasis on different policies than men, which is important to address. Women have struggled for political recognition for centuries. Dolan's book reviews that gendered perceptions and biases can exist for women the polls. Dolan finds that

voters look at candidates who are women through a gendered lens. This gendered lens can impose biases that may underestimate women's competency and impose stereotypically female personality characteristics onto the candidates. This, in turn, has the potential for voters to accept or reject candidates based on gender bias, and thus punishing women at the polls (Dolan).

Dolan's American-based study is relevant to Canada since we see similar patterns in representation here: there have only been roughly 100 women since MacPhail to have won federal or provincial seats in Canada (Bashevkin, 2011). As for the present research, there was a 3:1 ratio of women to men in the PC Leadership race. Yet, with a majority of women running, Ford still won the race. Dolan's research suggests that it is possible that this outcome reflects voters' gendered perceptions of the candidate. I seek to explore whether those perceptions are evident in the discourse and on Twitter toward candidates.

In 2018, Michelle Obama spoke at the United States of Women Summit where she explained how girls and women live to extreme standards of perfection. She argued that women are still coming to terms with what it means to be women. The ideas women have regarding gender are concerning, as women do not hold men to the same standard of perfection. Obama stated, "I wish girls could fail as bad as men do and still be okay" (United State of Women Summit, 2018, 24:19). She went on to explain that men are allowed to fail upwards, which we see similarly with Ford's family lawsuit and his brother's drug use legacy. As women, we continue to be skeptical of each other and our abilities and skills. Finneman (2015) agrees that women have to be twice as good as men to be considered equals with men. The socialization of girls impacts the contemporary conditions of women in politics both in America and Canada. Gender socialization has created barriers for women in politics by creating assumptions of what

gender 'should' include for women. There is a need to consider further how the different standards society sets for girls and boys affects women and men in political life.

Challenges that remain include the need for improved self-efficacy in women. The work by Fox and Lawless (2011), *Gaining and Losing Interest in Running for Public Office: The Concept of Dynamic Political Ambition* examine how perceptions of gender affect women's and men's beliefs to campaign effectively. Fox and Lawless report that even though the candidates they studied had similar credentials, women were significantly less likely to perceive themselves as qualified to campaign than men. Their research found that the differences in self-efficacy between women and men would inevitably hinder women's prospects for equal gender representation and equality. A Canadian study by Bashevkin (2011), In *Women's Representation in the House of Commons: A Stalemate?* found that despite women's gains in educational and professional attainment in both the United States and Canada, proportions of elected women are still disturbingly low. The work by Fox and Lawless may provide an explanation for why Bashevkin finds this; self-efficacy in women has continued to be low as even with more educational and professional attainment this has not translated into more women becoming politicians.

Bashevkin (2011) notes that the number of women in federal politics increased from 1984 to 2008 but has now plateaued. She reviews six factors that contributed to the growth in women MPs during those years. The most relevant factor suggests that affirmative action and internal party reforms pursued by the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Liberals ensured more women were nominated. Bashevkin suggested that the NDP and Liberal Party are more social justice focused and prioritize gender equality and diversity more than their PC counterpart. Therefore, it is not surprising that these parties achieved better gender representation. At the time

when there is an accurate gender representation in governance, there will be a greater policy emphasis on gender equity. Bashevkin argued that “the presence of fewer than 10% women MPs before the mid-1980s translated into the absence of pro-equality influences on public opinion” (p. 18). There is a need for more women to campaign for leadership positions in Canada so that more social justice and pro-equality strategies may be implemented and prioritized in the legislature.

The contemporary conditions for women, as reviewed by Dolan (2014) and political scientists is that voters view candidates who are women through a gendered lens, as voters ascribe stereotyped competencies and personality characteristics to this particular group of women. Socialization, self-efficacy, and bias have the potential to delegitimize candidacies for women, which may lead to female candidates developing an unfair disadvantage in the political arena. This project reinforces the idea that equal opportunity for women to participate in the legislature and politics more generally is important. The current project considered how those who use Twitter engage with the candidates of the PC leadership race and provincial election; because Dolan and political scientists believe voters view candidates who are women through a gendered lens, analyzing the discourse from Twitter users towards electoral candidates was essential to assess.

Twitter and Press Coverage

The work of Parmelee and Bichard (2012), *Politics and the Twitter Revolution: How Tweets Influence the Relationship between Political Leaders and the Public* explores how tweets influence the relationship between political leaders and the public. The authors explain how political leaders typically use Twitter as a vehicle for self-promotion, broadcasting information concerning policy and their public interests. Some political leaders also engage in Twitter by

having a two-way line of communication with the public that may foster a stronger relationship between the leader and followers. Parmelee and Bichard consider Barack Obama's successful presidential campaign in 2008 and how he followed the people who followed him as a way to better connect with people on an individual level. The relationship followers have with political leaders is very powerful; as followers often take action under the leader's request. There are nine characteristics of influential tweets: clarity, personal relevance, a call-to-action, usefulness, helpful links and hashtags, humour, interactivity, outrageousness, and political counterpoint. Tweets from political leaders provide followers with something to discuss, which can often, also help political leaders gain a broader audience. The research from Parmelee and Bichard is helpful for the current study because, as a new Twitter user, I found this work useful in understanding how Twitter works and why tweets can be influential in the relationship between political leaders and followers.

Thomas and Wilcox's (2014) "*Women and Election Office – Past, Present, and Future.*" This text reviews the progress and impact American women have made in elective office. Thomas and Wilcox explain that the treatment of women in the press is not yet without bias. Female candidates running for high levels of office receive less media coverage by leading news organizations than their male counterparts, and when these women receive media coverage, it is often negative in tone. Women in these positions are often at a disadvantage when pursuing governorship. Specifically, the media often focuses on women's attractiveness and appearance, including commentary of their age and clothing. Falk's (2010) book, *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* considers media bias in campaigns for women. She claimed that the failure of the press to cover political figures who are women in a way that is respectful of their skills and abilities may dissuade women from being politically engaged (Falk, 2010). This

project supported Falk's claim by bringing awareness of how women's experience in politics with media, in this case with social media, is different from that of men's. In analyzing the bias against women via Twitter, this project adds to the discussion of media treatment to women in political leadership.

Methodology

In Ontario, women have made exceptional progress in increasing political representation. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario from 2013-2018 and Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, and Andrea Horwath, Leader of the NDP, are both women. The third major candidate, Ford, is leader of the Progressive Conservatives, and premier-elect. The 2018 provincial election had a 2:1 ratio of women to men candidates; this is an excellent statistic being that Ontario had 107 ridings before the election and only 35% of MPPs were women (Rushowy, 2018). The provincial government has shown better representation of women compared to Canada's federal government, at the House of Commons with a mere 26% representation of women, this could be due to Ontario's Liberal party and NDP having made gender and diversity a priority (Anderssen, 2018). Some suggest, however, the provincial government has the most women represented because the sorts of policies and legislation passed at this government level deal with issues that fall under what are traditionally considered "women's responsibilities". These include human services, education, and health. A *Globe and Mail* poll was taken prior to the election that indicated there was a gender divide amongst those who planned to vote Progressive Conservative and those who did not, as Ford had collected most of the votes from men than the Liberals and NDP (Loriggio, 2018).

Despite the PCs seeming disinterest in promoting gender equity in politics, it is the party who had the only female Prime Minister Kim Campbell, from June 25 to November 4th of 1993.

Never elected, Campbell replaced Brian Mulroney when he resigned, and subsequently lost the next election. Her political leadership features characteristics not only of the glass ceiling but also of the ‘glass cliff’. Women who are challenged by the ‘glass cliff’ are provided the ‘opportunity’ to attempt to save a failing industry or in this case a failing government. Such work, often taken up by women, is typically risky, precarious, and exhaustively stressful (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich, & Wilson-Kovacs, 2009). In the likelihood she falls off the ‘glass cliff,’ she’ll be forced out of the executive leadership position and doubtlessly replaced with a man. Campbell was an accomplished female lawyer. Her loss can be attributed to the failures of the previous Conservative government of Brian Mulroney (Britten, 2016). Though the glass cliff is not a factor in the PC leadership race, Campbell’s story tells us something about the barriers women politicians face in Canadian political life and governance.

The first case study considered in the MRP is the 2018 PC Leadership race, which occurred within the context of an international conversation about sexual violence against women, known as the #MeToo movement. Tarana Burke, the founder of the #MeToo movement, explains that the movement is about the journey of healing and empowerment through empathy (Burke, n.d.). Through social media, #MeToo movement gave unprecedented attention to harassment and assault in professional spaces, predominantly in Hollywood and politics. The movement gave voices to female and male survivors of sexual violence. In the spirit or timing of this movement, and in the writing of this project, sexual misconduct allegations came up both provincially and federally. Concerning Ontario’s provincial politics two women came forward making sexual misconduct allegations against PC leader Patrick Brown on January 24th, 2018 (McLaughlin, 2018). Brown maintained that the allegations were false stating that, “I will defend myself as hard as I can with any means at my disposal. In short, I reject these accusations in the

strongest possible terms” (Benzie, 2018). Caroline Mulroney, a PC colleague recommended Brown resign as leader in the best interests of the party moving forward to the election (The Canadian Press, 2018). The morning after the accusations were made public, Brown resigned as PC leader but would remain in the caucus. Discussions began immediately about who would replace Brown. The PC candidate for Eglinton-Lawrence, Robin Martin stated that “I think a women leader would be great, but I also think we have to pick the very best leader we can get – not just any women leader” (Gerson, 2018). Martin’s statement was said before any of the candidates had officially declared their candidacy. Depending upon the context, one could interpret this statement as condescending about the abilities of the current PC Members of Provincial Parliament who are women and the women who ran for the PC Leadership race. One may consider that the statement promotes the idea that the candidates who are women were seen as women first, before being seen as politicians, as the quote would validate the gendered attitudes about women in Ontario’s politics which strengthens the glass ceiling against women in this field. This argument made, concerning Martin’s statement is context dependant by individual, though the statement does show consistent with the PC refusal to prioritize women candidates for the leadership race.

The candidates who ran in the PC Leadership Race included Tanya Granic Allen, Ford, Caroline Mulroney, and Christine Elliott. Granic Allen is a political and organizational consultant who is a social-conservative candidate (McQuigge, 2018). She focused on staying close to the party’s grassroots (Loriggio, 2018). She believed that parents should have more control over educational matters for their children and opposed the Liberal government’s sex education curriculum (McQuigge). Ford is a former Toronto City councillor and businessman. He is the President of Deco Labels & Tags, and his priorities have included tax-breaks for low-

income earners, restricting abortion access, and replacing the sexual education curriculum (Lukacs, 2018). Commentary against Ford may include the legacy of his brother Rob Ford. Similarly, with Doug, Rob advocated for the local taxpayers of Toronto, but it was the drug and alcohol use and abuse associated with his brother that sparked the questioning of Doug in running for PC leadership and the provincial election. Moreover, it was Rob's behaviour while involved with mayoral politics that compromises Doug's abilities and skills in attaining Premiership.

Mulroney is a Toronto lawyer, businesswoman (Loriggio), and co-founder of the Shoebox Project (McQuigge, 2018). She highlighted the following issues: affordability, childcare, hydro, and Ontario's future prosperity (Selley, 2018). Mulroney expressed that she is a PC member because she values the traditional principles of individual freedom and small government (Selley, 2018). Criticisms of Mulroney have considered her name recognition, as her father, Brian Mulroney is a past Prime Minister of Canada, in addition to having a 'lack of experience' with Ontario's provincial politics. As previously seen from the literature review, name recognition would typically be a good thing for a female candidate, though, individuals who are associated with the political dynasty carry the baggage of the previous leader with that name; as Brian Mulroney was not a popular Prime Minister by the end of his term. Mulroney stated her focus for the people by saying, "I believe in self-reliance, and that [is] what we need to do[,] is create the conditions for people to lift themselves up" (Selley). Elliott is a lawyer and a former Liberal Ombudsman for Ontario (McQuigge, 2018). She served the ridings of Whitby-Ajax and Whitby-Oshawa and ran in past leadership races, though unsuccessfully in 2009, and 2015 (McQuigge). It is arguable that Elliott had the most experience in the provincial legislature and could have been the most effective leader for the PC party. Both Mulroney and Elliott were

fresh faces that appeared soon after the sexual misconduct allegations against Brown were aired, which could be seen as especially appropriate given the discussion around fair treatment and opportunity for women at work; Selley explained that these women created a new focus and new energy that was more current in the times.

Ford won the PC Leadership Race, which pitted him against NDP leader Horwath and Liberal leader, Premier Wynne in the provincial election to follow. Their campaign will be the focus on the second case study. Horwath is a resident of Hamilton, Ontario, and focused on affordability for those with working-class values. She advocated for free childcare, drug, and dental coverage, putting hydro back into public hands, to name a few. She explains, “A lot of the things I feel passionate about come not just because I’m a New Democrat, but they come from who I am as a person” (McQuigge, 2018). Horwath is left-leaning and an advocate for better social policy. Watt (2018) argued, however, because the NDP and Liberal platforms are so similar this makes leadership a key factor in determining the outcome of the provincial election. Wynne, the first women Premier in Ontario and, the Liberal party leader is from the greater Toronto area of Richmond Hill. She explained that her plan is practical and if re-elected she would build on what her party has built on in the past five years (Rushowy, 2018). Wynne was an MPP since 2003 and was a former school board trustee, who advocated for an increased minimum wage, free childcare for preschool aged children and to expand Ontario’s greenbelt (Rushowy). Wynne is part of the LGBTQ community and is an advocate for social justice in Ontario. When asked about her legacy, she explained, “social justice is what drives me; it’s why I am here” (“Ontario liberal leadership,” 2013). These particular case studies are significant because in both instances of the PC Leadership Race and the provincial election, the ratio of female to male candidates is exceptionally high. The project will investigate to the fullest extent,

though a time-sensitive project, how gender perceptions via Twitter may impose stereotypes on women in politics.

Mason (2002) introduced qualitative research as moral practice amidst its political context. She claims that qualitative designs are holistic forms of analysis that use quantification, but do not do so in a way that is central to the method. Qualitative analysis is, “grounded in a philosophical position” (Mason, p. 3) which is concerned with how complex social contexts are experienced, understood, and constituted. This project was both qualitative and quantitative, as the number of tweets assessed, inclusive of their replies and Twitter engagement was a notably large sum to measure. My first research question, as inspired by Dolan (2014) is, do Ontario voters "evaluate women candidates as women first, punishing them at the polls if they do not fit traditional gendered expectations[.] [O]r are voters able to see these candidates as more than just women?" (p. 3). This idea questions whether Twitter users recognize female candidates as potentially valid and effective leaders of Ontario's PC party. Thus, how will voters think differently if the PC party assumes less of women initially? My next research question is, how does the political culture of Twitter represent the gender of male candidates in the 2018 PC leadership race and the 2018 provincial election? Here I will explain how Twitter users address male candidates more generally. The first two questions bring context to how politicians are spoken to by the public and how that may impact electoral success. My final research question is how did Twitter commenter engagement reflect the election results? Creswell (2015) notes this particular type of question requires purposeful, timely, and opportunistic sampling to accommodate the research that seeks to explore unfolding events. Therefore, in this instance, I am especially fascinated to establish groundwork that will consider if the Twitter engagement reflects the elimination process that saw Ford win the leadership of the PC party over Granic

Allen, Mulroney, and Elliot. Additionally, I will investigate if the Twitter engagement reflected the elimination process of the provincial election, in which Ford became Premier rather than either of the two female candidates, NDP leader Horwath, and Liberal leader and then Premier Wynne. What does this mean for women's political representation in Ontario?

Finneman (2015) explains that analyzing media texts alone is not enough to show breadth in one's research, but it gives a glimpse of the progression of complex social issues in media. Consequently, I have selected two dates to assess for the sample of the PC Leadership race. I selected February 14 as an observation day because this was the day the final female candidate, Granic Allen, declared her candidacy and was the day before the TVO all-candidate's televised debate. This date was not selected because of Valentine's day, though it did have some significance to gender and Twitter engagement. March 1 is the other observation date because that was the final debate, held in London, Ontario, before voting opened. Only three candidates participated; Mulroney had declined to attend this particular debate. Qualitative analyses will assist to delve into ideas around social relations between these candidates (Finneman, 2015).

The dates for the provincial election observations are May 7, the date of the first televised debate between Ford, Horwath, and Wynne, televised on CityNews. And June 7, which is the day of the provincial election. My analysis will take account of key events the week of the election, including Wynne's concession and lawsuit brought against Ford by a family member. It may be valuable to consider how these events may have contributed to the outcome of the provincial election. Before beginning data collection, I used biographical material and other media accounts to explore the candidates' background, policy, image, and their political legacy. This information will be necessary when bringing context to the Twitter culture during these political events.

The data collection for the PC Leadership Race and the provincial election is similar, though less data will be collected for the provincial election. For the PC Leadership Race, I analyzed the candidates' last five tweets on the listed dates mentioned above, and the first ten replies to each of those. For the provincial election, I analyzed the candidates last three tweets on the dates indicated above, and the first five replies to each of those. I have tracked the replies, reviewing the theme and subject from each reply. I then utilized discursive strategies (that is, an analysis of the prominent facts, opinions, and judgments displayed in the tweets) to compose a general theme. I categorized the tone from the replies using words such as "rude," "praise," "friendly," "condescending," "frustrated," or "sexual" to interpret the tweet. I also collected the subject of each reply to organize why the theme reflected the reply reviewed. After the data was collected and analyzed, I categorized the different themes (from the replies), by interpreting which words represented positive, neutral, or negative feelings associated with the topic of discourse per candidate. I then compared and contrasted the treatment of the candidates by comparing who had the most positive, neutral, and negative responses.

The research also compared the amount of Twitter engagement each candidate attained throughout their campaigns, inclusive to both the PC Leadership Race and the provincial election. Regarding Twitter engagement specifically, I have reviewed the number of replies, retweets, and likes per tweet, per candidate, per campaign and calculated each sum for comparison, to evaluate how the engagement may or may not have had some relevance to the elimination process and gender preference amongst candidates from the PC leadership race and provincial election.

In my review of voter engagement with political candidates on Twitter, I considered how stereotypes about women in these roles were displayed. Dittmar (2015) explains, "at their most

basic, stereotypes will tell us whether people see candidates to be capable of governing or not" (p. 7). It is through these assumptions that I have considered the treatment of women online. What makes this case study important is when the instances of stereotyping and harassment of women occur on Twitter, those pieces of data will be saved on social media and reviewed as discriminatory artifacts for this project. The PC leadership race and provincial election have provided an opportunity to analyze the gendered (mis)treatment of women in provincial politics online.

Results

The results quantify and analyze the number of negative, neutral, and positive themed replies that were displayed, as well as the degree of Twitter engagement candidates attained in the PC Leadership Race and the provincial election. Tables and figures (screen shot images) of Tweets are included to support my findings. To note, no sample in the research project included retweets, as the interest only concerned the data directly created and produced by the electoral candidates. These numbers do not include the number of times each theme was expressed, but the amount of positive, neutral, and negative type words that existed amongst the data collected.

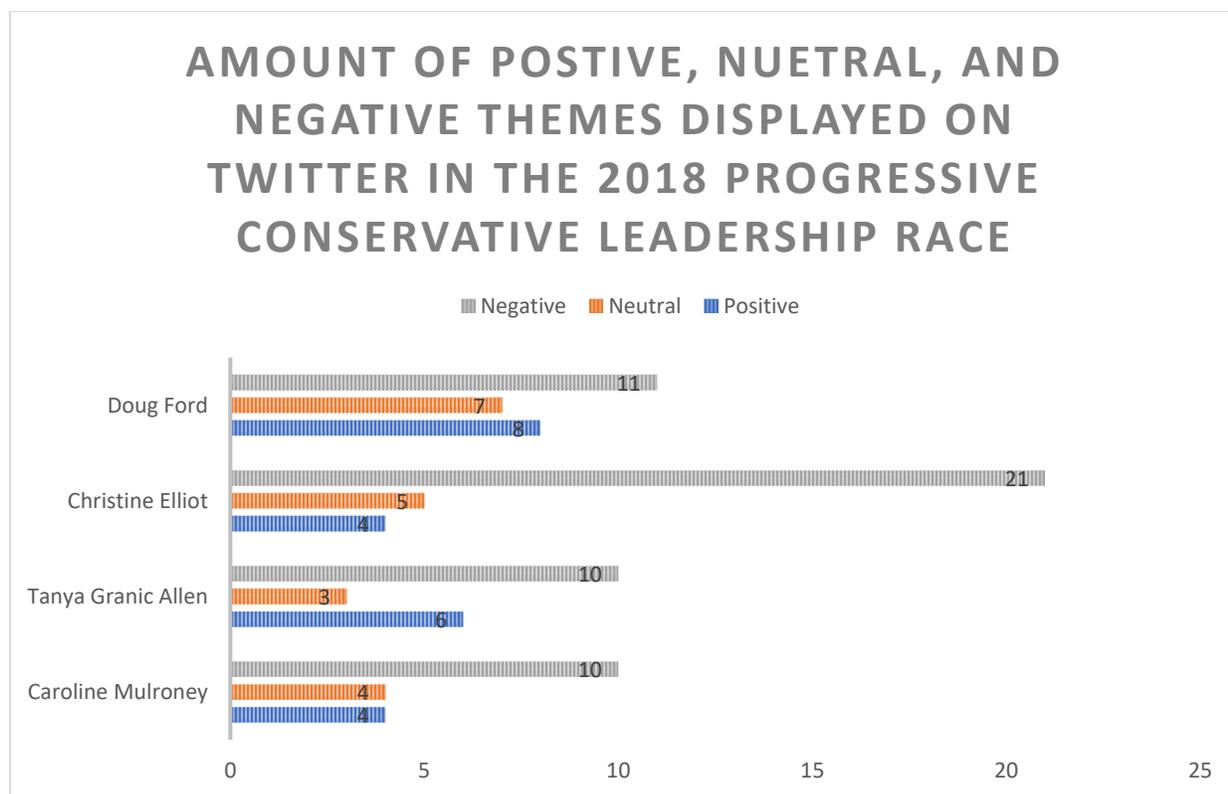


Table 1. Types of themes displayed in the PC Leadership Race



Figure 1. Gendered replies presented in a sexual nature

The results from the PC Leadership Race indicated that women attained fewer positive replies than the male candidate who ran (Table 1). Further, the highest number of negative replies was toward a female candidate (Table 1); included among the negative replies, gendered replies of a

sexual nature were made towards a female candidate in this sample (Figure 1). The candidate with the most neutral replies was male (Table 1). And of all the data collected for this project, there was no gendered commentary made toward Ford, only toward the women.

Other replies themed as ‘undercut,’ and ‘(male) precedence’ were also negative and could have been relevant to gender. An instance of the theme ‘undercut’ was when a candidate was overlooked due to past political roles and work history rather than being considered a quality candidate for their skills. For example, Elliot worked as a Liberal Ombudsmen, her professional skills were discounted or undercut for the role of leader of the PC party. Further, the theme ‘(male) precedence’ was used when a tweet published by a female candidate referred to Ford in the replies. The theme reflected ‘(male) precedence’ because the subject tweeted by the female candidate was interrupted due to the topic of the reply concerned Ford. The most relevant Twitter reply to answer the first research question continuously displayed in this sample was the link of a press interview with a female candidate who was aggressively asked family-focused questions. The electoral candidate was explicitly questioned about her family and children’s education. This reoccurring link strongly suggests that women are seen as women first before being seen as electoral candidates. No family-focused questioning appeared toward the male candidate in any of the Twitter sampling for either the PC leadership or provincial election. So not only did the female candidates not achieve the same or more positive replies than their male competitor, they also faced much more gendered commentary. Further, the male candidate was viewed as most likeable, given that he had the most positive and neutral replies. Ford became leader of the PC Party. This race reflected the possibility of Twitter attitudes have potentially “punished women at the polls” (Dolan, p. 2-3). By “punished,” I am implying that voters consciously or

subconsciously avoid voting for women candidates. This is one explanation for Ford defeating five women opponents in the leadership race and provincial election.



Figure 2. Non-quantified gendered reply

To understand sexism against women in political life, a tweet not in the sample will be included. The reply, came from a tweet that was analysed on March 1, outside the sample that would have been themed as gendered. There was a reply made toward a female candidate in the PC Leadership Race that would have been themed as gendered (Figure 2). In constructing the argument that electoral candidates are still seen as women before being politicians, this reply was valuable to provide in this results section. The second reply in Figure 2 displayed that the commenter felt that this electoral candidate was the best looking of the candidates in the PC Leadership. Though the commenter validated that her “looks” were not what the PC Leadership race is about, he still acknowledged physical appearance before the candidate’s platform, skillset, and leadership.



Figure 3. Classist focused reply toward electoral candidate

In keeping with an intersectional lens, two replies had the potential to be themed as classist and elitist. In the link mentioned previously, where Mulroney faced aggressive questioning, the video clip referenced how her children attended private instead of public education. In addition to being gendered, the second reply is classist, as the reply sarcastically says that the electoral candidate's limousine was right outside the image, associating Mulroney with wealth (Figure 3). Interestingly, Ford was never called out for his privilege of class, unlike Mulroney, which may be another indicator of gender. As predicted for this research study, intersectionality was not a predominant theme from this sample but could be explored further in future research.

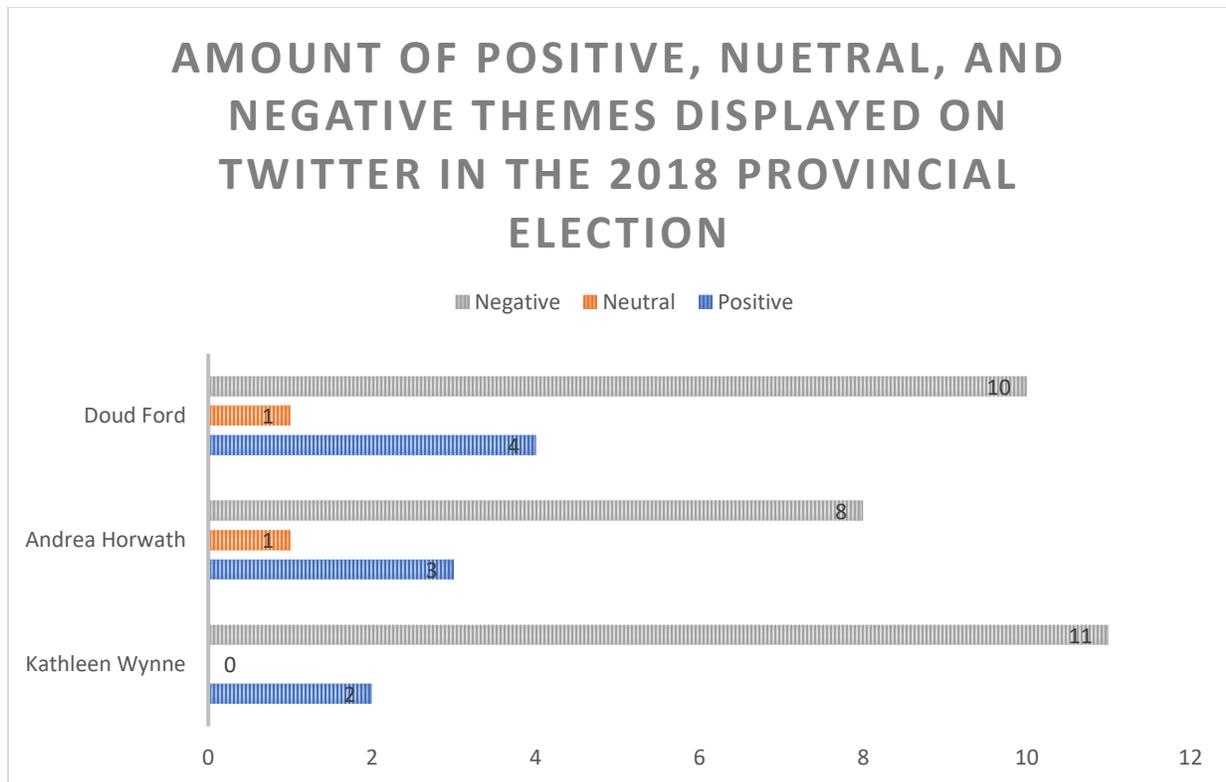


Table 2. Types of themes displayed in the provincial election

Regarding the first two research questions, the results of the provincial election were consistent with the PC Leadership Race in that electoral candidates who are women received fewer positive themes than their male counterparts (Table 2). Though the sample is significantly smaller for the provincial election, the results were similar.



Figure 4. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Wynne



Figure 5. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Wynne

Concerning Wynne specifically, she received no neutral themes, only negative and minimal positive. Her commentary reflected some warm and supportive themes but mainly consisted of themes of discouragement, accusations, corrections, rudeness, violence, revenge, and frustration (Figure 4 and 5). The results do not necessarily suggest Wynne lost the provincial election due to gender prejudices, yet, that is not to discount the bullying she faced on Twitter during this election. Wynne received 100 percent negative replies on May 7, which is higher than any competitors in the provincial election, and in all instances from the PC Leadership Race. Wynne

received the highest number of negative themes in the provincial election sample, then Ford, then Horwath.



Figure 6. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Ford



Figure 7. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Ford



Figure 8. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Horwath



Figure 9. Tweet reflecting bullying onto Horwath

Examples of bullying toward Ford can be viewed in Figure 6 and 7, and examples of bullying towards Horwath can be viewed in Figures 8 and 9, (inclusive to a gendered reply). Ford's critiques were not gendered like Horwath's as one of her replies explicitly used gendered slang to dispirit the electoral candidate. The word cunt originated in medieval England in 1230 and refers to the female genitalia and reproductive anatomy (Livni, 2017). The term cunt in context to this project, was used aggressively about Horwath and was also used to deter people from voting for her. More generally this word is not used in the same context toward men. For this research project, no sample was collected in either case study that involved discourse about male reproductive anatomy. This reply from the sample displays the difference in the political culture for women and men who were candidates and could be a potential explanation for why the glass ceiling persists in politics. I hypothesized that the women who ran in the provincial election would face the most bullying and harassment online than male candidates because of significant gender bias, and because of partisan tensions. Especially because a provincial election campaign would expose the candidates to more people with different ideas and political views. Whereas the audience of the leadership race had a PC focus or culture. Yet, based on this sample the hypothesis can only be somewhat supported as the two candidates who received the most negative themed replies were Wynne and Ford. Wynne indeed had the most, but Ford had the second most negative themed replies in this sample. The results of the provincial election showed both male and female electoral candidates faced bullying online. Nevertheless, Ford still

received the highest amount of positive replies compared to Horwath and Wynne. Implications of this support the idea that the political culture for men and women in politics are different and could also be telling to how the idea of the glass ceiling for women in politics is still present.

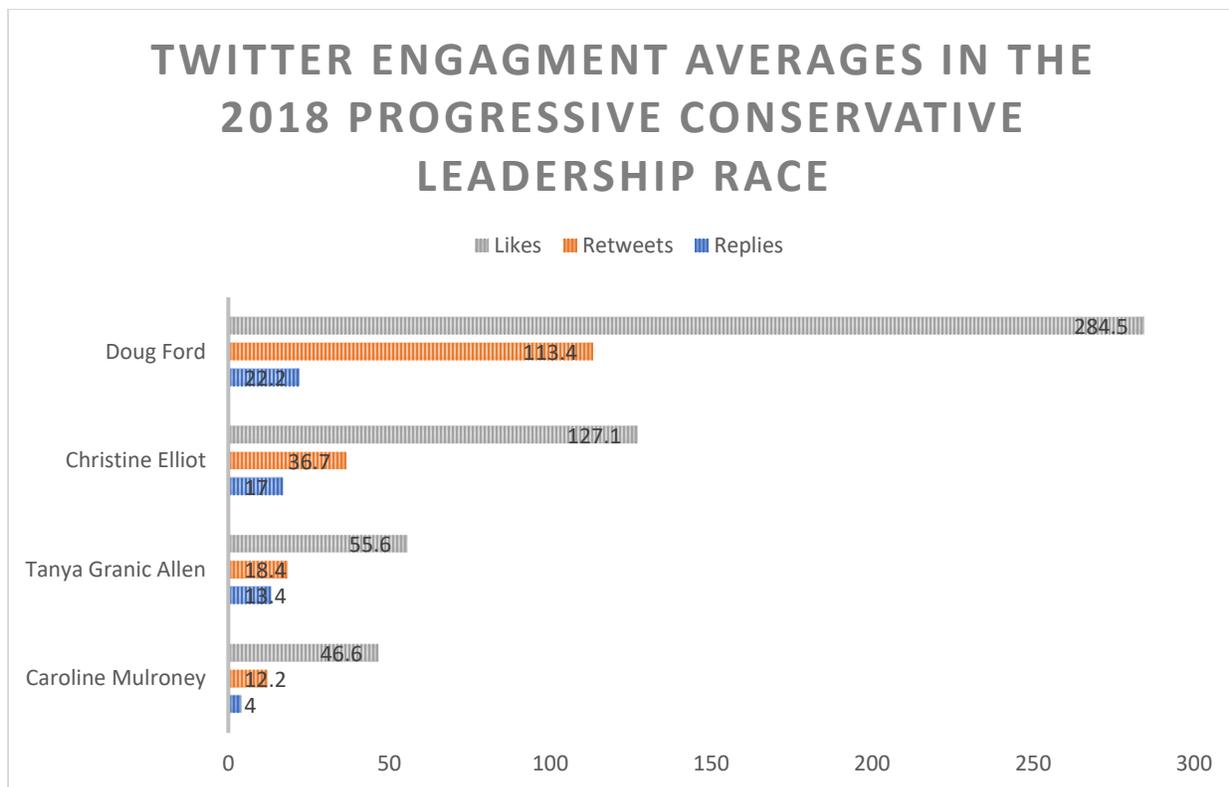


Table 3. Twitter engagement and the PC Leadership Race

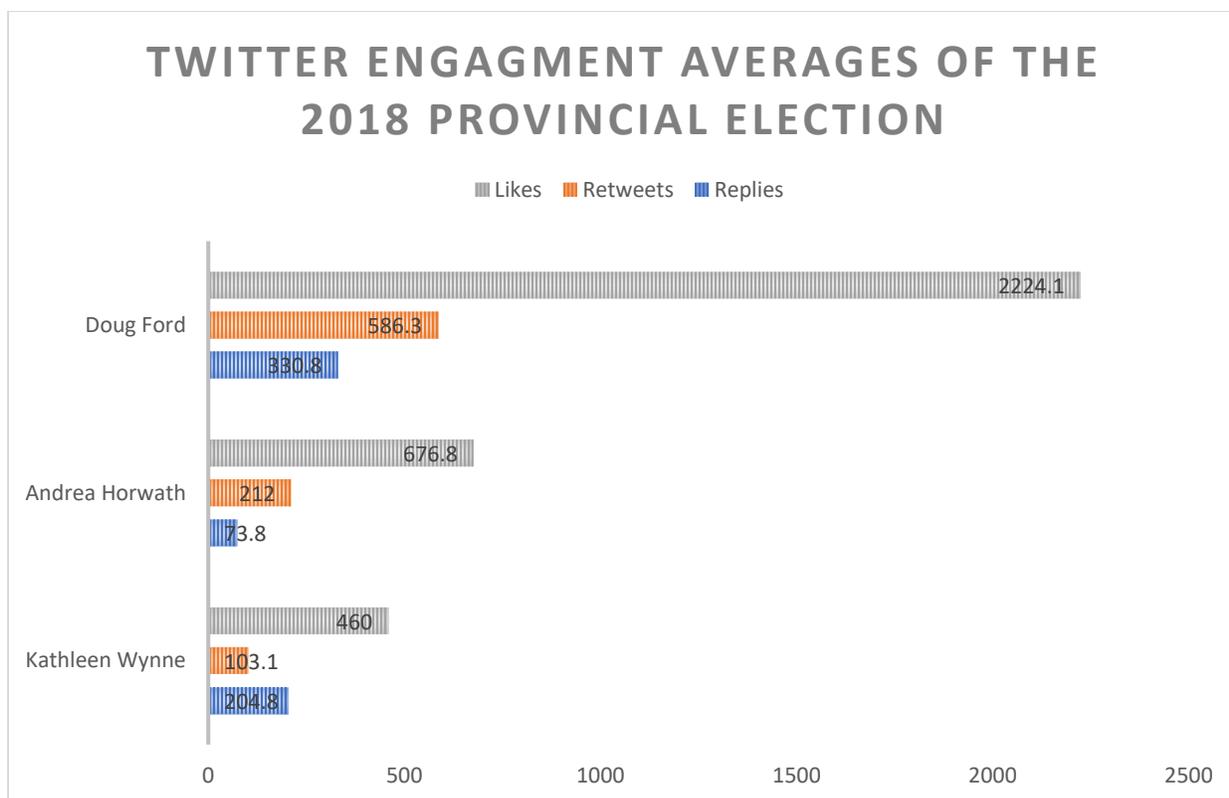


Table 4. Twitter engagement and the provincial election

The following data samples reflect the amount of Twitter Engagement in both the PC Leadership Race and the provincial election (Table 3 and Table 4). Initial similarities between both events suggest that the most common Twitter engagement is liking a tweet, then retweeting and replying. A difference is that the PC leadership race had far less Twitter engagement than the provincial election more generally, and in both events, Ford had received more Twitter engagement than all his competitors in all categories. This project considers the idea of ‘maleness’ as accepted and being related to likeability amongst the political discussion on Twitter as a potential reason for Ford attaining the most positive themed replies and Twitter engagement. To review the data from the PC leadership race, the Twitter engagement somewhat reflected the elimination process. The elimination process for this leadership race started with

Granic Allen, then Mulroney, then Elliot, and thus Ford achieved the leadership position for the PC party going into the 2018 provincial election. In reviewing Table 3, the elimination process matched all types of Twitter engagement for the final two competitors but did not match up for the earlier cuts, Granic Allen and Mulroney. Granic Allen had more Twitter engagement than Mulroney, even though she was only present for one sample day but was still cut first. From this sample, the weight of the election is possible to have been reinforced by the Twitter engagement but is not necessarily strong enough to have directly affected the election results.



Figure 10. Ford's Valentine's day poem

Nonetheless, the Valentine's Day poem tweeted by Ford on February 14 that was discouraging to Wynne had more Twitter engagement than all tweets analysed for the PC Leadership Race sample (Figure 10). The volume of Twitter engagement that supported Ford in mocking Wynne spoke to how women are treated online during electoral races. The poem was relevant to Valentine's day and it was gendered in the sense that the poem would be something men traditionally say to women. So not only was the tweet attacking to Wynne through some elements of bullying and harassment but it was also gendered. For this research project there was no data from a female candidate that explicitly attacked and discouraged a male candidate via Twitter. This sample supported the observation that electoral candidates who are women are

spoken to differently on Twitter than electoral candidates who are men. Further, it supports the observation that the online political culture for women who are electoral candidates can be of a bullying context, which may have the potential to impact the polls.

From this sample, it may also be valuable to consider that Mulroney had the lowest Twitter engagement from the two days in the PC leadership race sample. She also received the most gendered commentary – commentary of a sexual nature and involving family-focused questioning in a press conference. This evidence is highly relevant to the first research question as she could have been punished at the polls because of public attitudes of gendered prejudice, thus making her unlikely to reach leadership of the PC party. Especially being new to this field, she could have been targeted more easily than the other candidates.

The final set of results from the data collection reviewed the amount of Twitter engagement for the provincial election (Table 4). Regarding the second research question, the current political culture is highly accepting of Ford as he had, by far, the highest Twitter engagement. Additionally, it was one of Ford's tweets that had the most likes, with a total of 6800 likes. This ranking matched the order in which the electoral candidates lost/won the provincial election. However, there are other aspects of this graph that are critical to depict, as Horwath reached the second highest number of likes, followed by Wynne. The number of retweets had a similar trend amongst the electoral candidates. These trends do reflect the order of elimination of the provincial election; from Wynne having the least amount of likes and retweets to Ford reaching the highest amount of likes and retweets. The result of the provincial election had Ford achieve the title of Premier.

Still, if we compare the number of replies, these do not reflect the provincial election elimination process exactly. This means that it may also be valuable to notice how Horwath had

the fewest replies from the provincial election Twitter engagement, but it was Wynne who had the most negatively themed replies from the earlier provincial election sample, while Horwath had the second most positively themed replies from the earlier sample of the provincial election. This may imply that even though Wynne had the most replies, it may not mean the replies were positive in nature. In fact, it is likely that the replies were more negative. So even though Wynne had more replies, Horwath's fewer, more positive replies still suggest that this sample reflects the elimination process.

Discussion

This research adds to the discussion of women in politics, media, and gender. This project demonstrates the struggle of gender discrimination against women in political life on Twitter and seeks to recognize the efforts of women still progressing to shatter the glass ceiling. The results section reviewed occurrences from the data that considered the hardship for women in politics on Twitter. The preliminary research suggested that gender bias can affect leadership chances for women who run in political races and elections. The results provided insight into the relations and engagement between electoral candidates and Twitter users. The findings helped to paint a picture of the current political culture for men and women working in Ontario's provincial politics. The take-away concepts from this study will consider the following: twitter as a gendered and bullying platform, the acceptance of "maleness" and how "maleness" was preferred and seen as most likeable, and Twitter as a useful tool for research.

Twitter as a Gendered and Bullying Platform

This research suggests Twitter is a gendered and bullying platform against women who are electoral candidates. The first research question asked whether electoral candidates who are women were seen as women first instead of political representatives, and whether women were

punished at the polls for not following traditional gendered expectations. Finneman (2015) had argued that women tend to be asked condescending questions that emphasize gender rather than their political platforms. After interpreting the first research question and the data collected for the PC leadership race and the provincial election, I consider Twitter to foster a bullying platform against women in political life. The relations displayed on Twitter were often sarcastic, critical, and unsupportive of women, and though Twitter is validated as an easy method of connecting electoral candidates and politicians with constituents, instances of negativity towards women still occurred. Therefore, with Twitter reinforcing degradation of women in politics, more acceptance and open-mindedness is necessary for fairness and equal opportunity for electoral candidates who are women.

Family-focused questioning as seen on Twitter reinforced the novelty of women in politics and furthered the idea that Twitter is an agent for bullying against women. Family-focused questioning contributed to the discrimination of women, especially for those who seek leadership in non-traditional roles like politics. Dittmar (2015) discussed that family is a gendered institution that often has a place in campaigns for women; she believes that family life is, “one of the most explicitly gendered institutions in private life, family generates questions of gender roles and expectations in public life as well” (p. 110). Specifically, the questioning Mulroney received would never have been posted to Ford; moreover, no data collected from the PC leadership race and the provincial election involved data concerning his children’s education plan. As mentioned in the literature review section, Finneman (2015), “the trivialization of women candidates throughout history has resulted in the absence of widespread political knowledge about the impressive and capable women who have lived political lives” (p. 3). The gendered treatment of women in media sends a message about “women’s place, women’s role,

and women's lives" (Finneman, p. 2). The data suggested that on Twitter, gendered treatment of electoral candidates who are women are still being seen as women first in Ontario politics.

Insight into the sexualization of women as expressed on Twitter can be considered through a gendered reply to a tweet that was not analysed as a part of this study. In this sample, a tweet directed to Granic Allen spoke to how she was deemed to be the "best looking" electoral candidate in the PC leadership race. This reply, though not collected amongst the sample, spoke to the first research question because she was explicitly viewed in a sexual manner over her abilities, skillset, and political platform. The reply was very gendered toward her as a woman. The reply suggested that women are still seen as women first before being seen as politicians. The inspiration to conducting research of this nature is to address prejudices against women, as women are still not seen as equals in this field because of replies like this. The relationships women try to create with voters through online platforms like Twitter become easily complicated because of women's sexualization and traditional gender norms against them. While conducting research on Twitter for this MRP, it was clear that Twitter can become a platform for bullying as well as gendered exploitation of electoral candidates who are women. In speaking to gendered bullying on Twitter for candidates more generally, all people have the potential to be bullied online, and there were some instances against Ford, though the most bullying and gendered replies remained against the women who ran.

The sexualization of electoral candidates is an important facet of gendered commentary to discuss regarding Twitter as a bullying platform. Dolan (2015) suggested that candidates who are women are directed to think more about their physical appearance and dress than men typically do while campaigning, as women are advised upon how to appear most neutral to appeal to most voters. Even so, Mulroney was challenged with disturbing content that was very

sexual in nature. The first research question for this project asked whether women were seen as women first and not as the capable, intelligent electoral candidates they are, and whether they were punished at the polls for not meeting traditional gender expectations. In this instance, the research found, as an example, a reply toward Mulroney which suggested that her photographer had a preoccupation with her back. The following reply spoke to how Mulroney herself looks good from the back as well. Sexual tones from Twitter replies may result in similar consequences of sexual harassment. These replies are not only sexualizing the electoral candidate but are also condescending and disrespectful, as the individual loses their sense of agency. Mulroney had not been viewed as a respected electoral candidate from the data on this race. Especially because Mulroney had been addressed by her first name in the sexualized replies on March 1, it is clear Mulroney has not been given respect as a candidate for PC leadership. When reviewing Mulroney's data from Twitter, it may be important to consider that women in this field in Ontario face sexual harassment and bullying on Twitter; and for that reason, Canada has a long way to go on women's equal opportunity and fair treatment in provincial politics.

The second piece to the first research question asked if women were punished at the polls for not meeting traditional gender expectations. The evidence from the reply's themes and Twitter engagement do appear as relevant because Granic Allen and Mulroney were out sooner than Elliot and Ford, and they were the candidates with the gendered commentary. Additionally, because Mulroney is new to this field, though having relevant credentials, she could have been targeted more easily than the other candidates for this reason. Overall, it is likely that the other women were punished at the polls because public attitudes of gendered prejudices and bullying, separated these individuals as quality candidates to reach leadership of the PC party.

Wynne's most significant problem going into the election would be getting voters to stop dwelling on their dislike towards her, as voters liked the Liberal's policies (Castoldo, 2018). Consequently, Castoldo questioned if Wynne was being judged so harshly because she was a woman, which is often the case in politics. A tweet produced by Ford on February 14, 2018, supported Castoldo's claim about Wynne, as the poem created by Ford received the most Twitter engagement than any other tweets analysed for the PC leadership race. The poem was discouraging and condescending to Wynne and is important to discuss concerning bullying to electorates who are women. Additionally, the PC leadership race and the provincial election showed consistently that women received fewer positive themed replies than their male counterpart. The tweets as shown from the provincial election were very negative towards Wynne, some themed as violent, accusing, and revengeful. The tone of these types of tweets could be observed as hateful towards Wynne, as Twitter users persisted to personally attack and bully the electoral candidate.

Days before the election Wynne conceded that after the election she would no longer be Premier of Ontario (Wells, 2018). Wells explained that Wynne could be categorized as one of the most unpopular leaders in Canadian history. The data collection agreed with what Wells said as Wynne scored the highest number of negative themed replies with the lowest number of positive replies. Additionally, for this sample Wynne had no neutral themed replies, which reinforced the idea that people either supported her or strongly disliked her. To note, Wells described the people who use hatred and rage against women who are political leaders tend to focus their argument on partisanship and not gender. This research project did not thoroughly address voters' perceptions of gender and partisan politics together but is encouraged for further investigation in future research. Wells asserted that, "high achieving women experience social

backlash because their very success—and specifically the behaviours that created that success—violates our expectations about how women are supposed to behave.” Gender binaries imposed on women are restricting to women who seek non-traditional careers, such as politics. A major roadblock for women in political life is the idea that politics was not an appropriate role for women (Lynch & Dolan, 2014). Lynch and Dolan explain that historically female candidates were faced with hostility from voters who did not see politics fit for women. Thus, the relationship female candidates have to build with voters is far more complex because of these gendered issues (Lynch & Dolan). There will always be some facet in which women in politics fall short, some explanation, some reason to blame, where in the end women are still not there, as accepted with men in politics. Loriggo (2018) validated this by saying if the Liberals want to stay in power, it is with the men the Liberals will have to make progress. Though I question, as a woman hoping to get into political life herself, when will be the time when women do not have to be the ones to modify their behaviour when change needed is to be with those who hold the power?

The glass ceiling for women, is still in tact, as candidates who are women are treated differently and often worse than men in political life (Hayes & Lawless, 2016). Women have a right and responsibility to be a part of Ontario’s legislature. Even if the media often includes ideas about women’s appearance, family life, personality, while, men’s professional backgrounds are more valued and right for office-holding (Hayes & Lawless). The unequal portrayals of political representatives who are women in the media has the potential to reinforce untrue and unfair beliefs about politicians in voters’ minds (Hayes & Lawless). With social media such as Twitter, harassment and bullying toward women have the potential to persist well beyond what most deem as fair or appropriate (Bennett, Bernard, & Squires, 2017). Bennett, Bernard, and

Squires ask if, “there will always be a level where it will be acceptable to sexualize women and equate their power and leadership to how they look and what they wear” (p. 31)? This research project sought to explore how politicians who are men and women are spoken to while in public life. This discourse analysis of gender perceptions on Twitter brought context to the political culture of Twitter in Ontario and indicated that at times, women were not addressed in a way that was ethical or fair in light of them leading their campaigns.

“Maleness” as most Accepted

The second discussion theme will review the acceptance of “maleness” and how “maleness” was preferred and seen as most likeable. The project will be referring to “maleness” as the voter preference for men in traditional careers like politics. These gendered notions are the invisible forces that strengthen the glass ceiling for women who also conduct campaigns for leadership. Further, these forces continue to hold women back similarly in fields such as, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To provide context to this assumption, the second research question asked what the political culture on Twitter was like for the male candidate in the 2018 PC leadership race and the 2018 provincial election? From the data collected, Ford had the most positive themed words and the most Twitter engagement in all instances of the data collection. One of Ford’s tweets had more likes than all other tweets analyzed from the provincial election, with a total of 6800. His tweets also ranked well on the number of neutral and positive themed replies for the PC leadership race and had the most positive themed words from the provincial election. Overall, Ford appeared as the most likable candidate, as the political culture was highly accepting of him.

Dolan (2015) suggests that the degree to which women are subjected to gender stereotypes may be dependant on the level and type of government pursued by women. Voters

desire more male characteristics for candidates in higher levels of governance (Dolan). Similarly, Finneman (2015) considered the strategy of female candidates who adopt conservative values, such as disapproval of abortion rights, to increase the approval of voters. Thus, it was likely easy for voters to accept and associate Ford with advocating for traditional conservatism. Ford advocated against abortion rights and the removal of the sex education curriculum during his campaigns. Given Dolan's argument, and Finneman's example, one may have questioned if Ford's candidacy was successful because of his platform or due to voter approval of gender, or a combination.

Days prior to the provincial election, Ford was sued by Renata Ford, widow of the late Rob Ford over the family business, Deco Labels & Tags. Though, I argue because of the desire of "maleness" in electoral campaigns, Ford was able to overturn the public family dispute and win the provincial election. In addition, he overturned the negative publicity associating him with his brother's drug use legacy. I question, if a female electoral candidate could make a similar turnaround and attain leadership? As voters' expectations for "maleness" is strongly asserted in leadership campaigns and elections, and the expectations held to women about balancing family with public life could deter voters from supporting these women.

It is interesting how similar strategies in campaigns can be so easily accepted and rejected based on a candidate's gender. Ford made exaggerated statements during his campaign, including this example: "you could sneeze and find billions of dollars at the province," (CBC News, 27:52). Granic Allen made similar statements during her campaign when she expressed concern about wind turbines by making a similar claim, "that when I am leader, I'm going to take those wind turbines and rip them, right out of the ground" (CBC News, 28:32). Yet, when Granic Allen made such statements, voters disapproved: she did not make the PC leadership, nor

did she make it as an MPP on Ford's team. This discussion argued that the acceptance of "maleness" and how "maleness" was preferred and seen as most likeable to be at the forefront to why Ford succeeded at both PC leadership and in attaining the title of Premier of Ontario.

Twitter as a Useful Tool for Research

I embarked on a Twitter analysis that deeply regarded gender perceptions from the PC leadership race and the provincial election. In learning about this social media, I considered the lingo and how the Twitter tone would read. Not only tone, but I learned about the depth of Twitter engagement, including how threads, replies, and retweeting functioned given the political context. I have strong familiarity with Facebook and found some similarities, though Twitter has its own flavour. The amount of Twitter characters per tweet forces its users to be concise in their arguments. Electoral candidates used Twitter for arguments and as a bulletin for campaign progress. I found Twitter as a useful tool for research and would go this route again for future research.

In conducting Twitter research, I explored human communication via social media to observe users' social motivations in the exchange of replies during election campaigns. Replies were clearly organized as I could review who the reply was addressed to exactly. People on Twitter used this social media as an outlet and as a means to express a multitude of beliefs and opinions. Additionally, Twitter users likely engage with electoral candidates to increase one's political diversity and knowledge. Though it is possible that conducting research on Twitter is somewhat limited to a certain audience, I found the diverseness of discussion was present; some discussion gendered, some not, some helpful and motivational, and some not. Twitter will always include the instances of aggression and anger, yet that is not to disregard the support and encouragement of some replies. Twitter allowed for a multiplicity of participants because the

quantity of engagement, in which was helpful to compare on the sample dates. Overall, Twitter was an insightful tool for measuring candidacies.

There were many avenues to explore when completing research on Twitter. This study considered the number of positive, negative, and neutral type words replied on select tweets and dates. Future research could review the number of times each type of word occurred. As well, one could evaluate Twitter habits and patterns of people who frequently replied. Twitter accommodates a multitude of research projects and directions for exploring gender perceptions in politics. Further research could concentrate more on how Twitter engagement reflected the elimination process of campaigns and elections. Twitter engagement could have been a subject for analysis alone, and more discussion and research could be valuable on this, relative to political science, media, and gender.

Limitations of this research project may include my own reflections and biases as a researcher, whose passion is for social justice for women in politics. Other limitations respecting the research method may consider misrepresentation or misunderstanding of individual replies in tweets analysis. Further, not all tweets had 10 replies to review for the PC leadership race, and not all candidates were present on the select days for data collection. A more in-depth study that considered a longer time frame and a larger sample of candidates, including people of colour, would provide more context and data to future research that is interested in understanding the connection between gender and candidacy.

Conclusion

The overall findings from this research suggest that Twitter has the potential to be a gendered and bullying platform. Family-focused questioning and sexualization of electoral candidates who are women is still a problem in Ontario's political culture online. The data from

Twitter was often unsupportive of women running for leadership, even though women have the right and duty to participate in the legislature. The research also found that there was an underlying value supporting “maleness” as it was seen as most likeable. The political culture on Twitter was highly accepting of Ford, as the male binary was consistent with his career goals. Though Ford did face some bullying on Twitter, the women candidates faced the most bullying and discouragement overall. Finally, Twitter was a useful tool for conducting research. I utilized Twitter to observe gender perceptions and social motivations from Twitter users toward electoral candidates. Here I could clearly analyze and reflect on the data. I recommend Twitter as an insightful tool for research as there is much potential for research methodologies.

The purpose of the research was to spread awareness of the realities facing candidates and politicians who are women both on and off Twitter. Additionally, I had hoped to bring awareness to how online discourse contributed to the reinforcement of unequal power relations. The goal of this project was to bring forth a discussion that investigated the barriers by which, contribute to women’s underrepresentation in politics; for those not represented, be included so that we can work to build a more balanced political culture. I hope that this research will serve as a helpful tool for women entering politics and provide the momentum to keep making swings at the glass ceiling.

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