

Free research proposal about social media, swearing and gender: identifying new t...

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Swearing holds a unique place in society that is rife with contradictions. It can elevate one's image as bold and assertive, and simultaneously diminish another's image as uncouth and aggressive. It is perceived as unacceptable language in the classroom, yet essential on the sea deck. There is an innate hierarchy in swear words or phrases, which is constantly shifting. Societal change largely dictates acceptance or rejection of obscenities. Some words or phrases become acceptable within common vernacular and others mutate into objectionable vitriol. Words that were heard only in watering holes are now common on primetime television. In an increasingly politically correct milieu the reverse is also true.

Among the most interesting changes in swearing has occurred on social media. Platforms such as text messaging, Twitter and Facebook have spurred a culture of communication that is defined through abbreviations. Expletives are reduced to single letters and buried in a three or four letter abbreviation. This softening of swearing has consequently entered the vernacular through television, news outlets, and every day discourse. Anecdotally, it appears that both males and females have embraced abbreviations as a means of engaging in swearing as part of everyday discourse.

Over time, research has revealed that there are discrepancies between genders in the context of swearing (Gender and Swearing: A Community of Practice; Language and Gender). Evidence suggests that swearing reflects masculine qualities. In the case of females, swearing reflects lower social status, or selective swearing whereby certain words are avoided as they compromise femininity (Gender and Swearing: A Community of Practice 32).

In the context of social media there have been some studies on the evolution of language (A broad-coverage normalization system for social media language; Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web) and even swearing (Fk yea I swear: Cursing and gender in MySpace), yet no studies on language abbreviations and gender on social media exist.

This proposal posits the following question, " How have abbreviations utilized on social media impacted or increased the use of swear words among females as compared to males?" Considering the widespread use of social media, and the volumes of data that are readily available, there is a unique opportunity to engage in this research to better understand the relationship between language and gender.

. Works Cited

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