

ABSTRACT

SOLEBELLO, NICHOLAS PAUL. Explaining the Gender Gap in Capital-Enhancing Website Use: The Effect of Male-Oriented Website Content. (Under the direction of Martha Crowley.)

The Internet has grown rapidly over the past two decades and researchers continue to discuss the potential benefits of Internet use depending on how an individual utilizes it. Researchers argue that a large part of the advantages from Internet use stem from visiting capital-enhancing websites that provide individuals with educational, financial, occupational or networking opportunities that help cultivate human, cultural, and social capital. Despite these prospective benefits, previous literature finds that women lag behind men in overall frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use. This article extends the literature on capital-enhancing website use by testing two possible explanations for why the gender gap exists: 1) the unequal division of household labor, and 2) non-capital-enhancing website content geared towards men. The findings from an analysis of General Social Survey (GSS) data from 2000-2004 indicate that the gendered content of Internet websites may play a large role in determining women and men's capital-enhancing website use. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for gender inequality in the digital age.

Explaining the Gender Gap in Capital-Enhancing Website Use:
The Effect of Male-Oriented Website Content

by
Nicholas Paul Solebello

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APPROVED BY:

L. Richard Della Fave

Sinikka Elliott

Martha Crowley
Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis in honor of those I left behind.

“I have only accepted the fact that I
Must leap off this mountain
Because I see a path leading
Back in case I get lost down below.”

BIOGRAPHY

The author was born in Providence, Rhode Island but spent the first eleven years of his life living in the small town of Ladysmith, Virginia. He then went on to spend the greater part of the next 11 years in Cumberland, Rhode Island and eventually attended college at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. It was there the author double majored in English and Sociology and had the honor of befriending Dr. C.B. Peters and Dr. Helen Mederer. Their guidance and friendship lead the author to consider a career as a sociologist and apply to graduate school. The author eventually attended North Carolina State University as a doctoral student in 2007 and remains there currently. The author's sociological interests are vast but his concentrations are Work, Industry, and Organizations and Inequality with special attention to masculinity and gender studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
EXPLAINING THE GENDER GAP IN CAPITAL- ENHANCING WEBSITE USE: THE EFFECT OF MALE-ORIENTED WEBSITE CONTENT	1
Digital Divides: Access and Use	2
Male-Oriented Websites and Capital-Enhancing Website Use	5
Data and Variables	8
Analytic Strategy	12
Findings	13
Discussion/Conclusion	15
References Cited	21
Tables	23
APPENDICES	26
Appendix A. Description of Indices Created for the Analyses	27
Appendix B. Unstandardized Coefficients from OLS Regressions of Gender and Other Controls on Frequency of Non-Capital- Enhancing Website Use	28

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Means and standard deviations for all variables	23
Table 2	Unstandardized coefficients from OLS regressions of work and family characteristics on frequency and variety of capital-enhancing Internet use	24
Table 3	Unstandardized coefficients from OLS regressions of non-capital-enhancing websites and control variables on frequency and variety of capital-enhancing Internet use	25

Explaining the Gender Gap in Capital-Enhancing Website Use: The Effect of Male-Oriented Website Content

The literature analyzing capital-enhancing website use—websites with educational, financial, occupational or networking opportunities that help individuals cultivate human, cultural, and social capital—shows that men visit these websites more frequently than women (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008; Robinson, DiMaggio, and Hargittai 2003; Wasserman and Richmond Abbott 2005). Yet, few researchers offer reasons for why this gender gap in capital-enhancing website use exists. One possible explanation suggests that women's greater household responsibilities affect the amount of time they spend on the Internet and direct women to use the Internet in stereotypically gendered ways (Kennedy, Wellman, and Klement 2003; Selwyn, Gorard and Furlong 2005). Indeed, women do tend to spend less time online than men (Kennedy et al. 2003). However, researchers have only applied this explanation to gender differences in general Internet use and not capital-enhancing website use specifically. In addition, this explanation does not address the effect that website content potentially has for enticing or deterring potential Internet users.

In this paper, I extend previous research by testing whether Kennedy et al.'s (2003) explanation for differences in frequency and variety of general Internet use accounts for gender disparities in capital-enhancing website visitation and present a different argument highlighting the importance of Internet website content. My alternative explanation investigates the effect of non-capital-enhancing websites (or websites mainly used for leisure) on capital-enhancing website use. I argue that many of these non-capital-enhancing

websites are male-oriented, or cater to the stereotypical interests of men, and provide men with a greater incentive to visit a wider variety of sites and visit these sites more frequently. In other words, male-oriented websites like sports, pornography, and games attract men to use the Internet more, which in turn, encourages them to use the Web in capital-enhancing ways. Indeed, my results from an analysis of three years of GSS data (2000-2004) indicate that the male-oriented content in Internet websites may play a large role in determining gender disparities in capital-enhancing website use. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for gender inequality in the digital age.

Digital Divides: Access and Use

At the Internet's inception, research concentrated on differences in online access along the lines of race, class, and gender (for a literature review see DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste and Shafer 2004). This literature mainly examines the political, social, and economic differences between "users" and "nonusers" (Bonfadelli 2002; Ono and Zavodny 2003). For example, some researchers look at public opinion differences and tolerance (Robinson, Neustadtl, and Kestnbaum 2002; Neustadtl and Robinson 2003), or amount and variety of social contacts (Neustadtl and Robinson 2002) between users and nonusers. Most often researchers find that, compared to nonusers, Internet users are White men with higher incomes, more liberal attitudes, and more social contacts. Researchers call these differences in access the "first-level digital divide" but the spread of the Internet in schools, public

buildings, at work, and in the home have closed this gap in recent years (DiMaggio et al. 2004; Ono and Zavodny 2003).

A growing literature now concentrates on “second-level” digital divides (Hargittai 2002), or areas where Internet inequality occurs in reference to *how* individuals make use of their computer/Internet access and the differing rewards they receive from these specific uses (see Dewan and Riggins 2006; Mossberger, Tolbert, and Stansbury 2003 for a review). In other words, researchers argue that there are qualitative differences in the benefits gained from computer and Internet use depending on whether an individual uses their computer for leisure activities like gaming, administrative duties like typing reports, or individual benefit through accessing information. Researchers argue that individuals benefit from Internet use the most by visiting “capital-enhancing websites” (DiMaggio et al. 2004; Hargittai 2002; Hargittai and Shafer 2006; Robinson et al. 2003; Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott 2005). These sites have educational, financial, networking, or employment information and provide individuals with more concrete skills, knowledge, and potential advantages than the leisurely or non-capital-enhancing uses of the Internet like playing games or looking up sports scores.

Researchers consistently find that men visit capital-enhancing websites more frequently than women (e.g. Robinson et al. 2003). Yet, in research on capital-enhancing website use, investigators often treat gender as secondary to variables more central to their specific theoretical arguments. Prior studies consequently offer few explanations for why this gender gap in capital-enhancing website use exists. However, in their work on gender differences in *general* Internet use, Kennedy et al. (2003) offer one explanation that may

apply to the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use. Part one of Kennedy et al.'s (2003) explanation for gender differences in Internet use emphasizes constraints on women's time relative to men. Not surprisingly, research finds that the more time an individual spends online, the more frequent and diverse their use becomes (Kennedy et al. 2003). However, these researchers argue that gendered domestic work and the presence of children hinder women from spending more time online because these responsibilities tend to disproportionately fall on women. Similarly, Selwyn et al.'s (2005) qualitative data support this argument, demonstrating that familial relationships and household chore structure shortchange women more than men with respect to amount of time spent on the Internet (and thus, frequency and variety of website use).

The second part of Kennedy et al.'s (2003) explanation emphasizes how qualitative differences in the household responsibilities of women and men shape Internet usage. They assert that individuals "do" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) by using different Internet websites. Specifically, men visit more hobby, news, and sports websites, while women visit what they term "nurturing" websites, gathering health information or cooking recipes. They argue that this difference, like time on the Internet, reflects the disproportionate distribution of household responsibilities. In other words, because women bear the responsibility for the bulk of household chores and child care, they use the Internet chiefly to help with these responsibilities. Likewise, Tsai and Lin (2004) find that women tend to use the computer and Internet more as "tools" to get things done and help with tasks, while men use the computer and Internet more as "toys," spending a majority of their online time on leisure

activities. Thus, this distinction between tools and toys may reflect men's lower responsibility for household tasks and greater freedom to relax at home.

I extend previous research by applying these arguments to the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use. I investigate whether gendered household dynamics mediate the relationship between gender and frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website visitation. I use "number of children in the household" as a proxy for gendered household dynamics, following Kennedy et al. (2003). However, to further account for household situations placing gendered demands on women's time, I also add indicators for marital and employment status.

- H1: Men visit capital-enhancing websites more frequently than women.
- H2: Men visit a wider variety of capital-enhancing websites than women.
- H3: Number of children in the household, marital status, and work status mediate the relationship between gender and frequency of capital-enhancing websites visited, and between gender and variety of capital-enhancing website visitation.

Male-Oriented Websites and Capital-Enhancing Website Use

While Kennedy et al.'s (2003) household division of labor explanation may help account for the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use, I present an alternative hypothesis and argue that the gendered *content* of websites provides men with more incentive to use the Internet in capital-enhancing ways. Previous research provides ample evidence to suggest that Internet website content favors certain groups over others. As Barbatsis,

Camacho, and Jackson (2004) suggest, minorities use the Internet less because the design and content of websites do not “speak to” their concerns. In essence, they claim that the Internet is a White, middle-class production. I argue that the Internet is a male production as well. In fact, research on technology use often addresses the possibility that socialization and the abundance of men in math, science, and computer-related fields steer women away from (and men towards) using technology like the Internet (e.g. Selwyn 2007; Stienstra 2002; Wyer 2001). For instance, Cooper (2006) finds that since most computer programmers are men, they make media like computer games with boys in mind. Likewise, I argue that when men devise Internet content, they also create it with other men in mind—attracting them to use the Internet more frequently and visit a wider variety of website content, including capital-enhancing websites. Thus, I argue that this male-oriented website content is at least partially responsible for the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use.

Much of the male-oriented content on the Internet (like pornography or sports sites), however, does not fall under the category of “capital-enhancing websites.” Instead, it represents part of what previous research calls “non-capital-enhancing” Internet content which individuals mainly use for recreational purposes (e.g. Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott 2005). Most research spends little time discussing non-capital-enhancing website visitation but researchers do show that men visit non-capital-enhancing websites more often than women (e.g. Robinson et al. 2003). These results make sense considering Tsai and Lin’s (2004) finding that men use the Internet and computers more often as “toys,” and women use computers as “tools.” However, if men use the computer more often as toys,

why then, as research shows, do men still visit more capital-enhancing websites than women? Could there be a link between the more superfluous, non-capital-enhancing uses of the Internet (specifically, sites oriented towards men like sports, pornography and games) and visiting capital-enhancing websites? Peng, Tsai, and Wu's (2006) study may provide some evidence to confirm this link. As a follow up to Tsai and Lin's (2004) study on perceptions of the Internet, Peng et al. (2006) find that individuals who perceive the Internet as a "tool" are less likely to use the Internet than individuals who view the Internet as a "toy." They suggest that this difference occurs because people who perceive the Internet as a toy may have more positive attitudes towards Internet use in general. Thus, if men view the Internet more often as toys and they are more likely to use the Internet because of this, then the websites used for leisure (non-capital-enhancing websites) may have an effect on capital-enhancing website use. Furthermore, I argue that these positive attitudes towards the Internet may result from non-capital-enhancing website content that often caters to the stereotypical interests of men, enticing men to use the Internet more frequently and to a greater extent.

I investigate this potential link and expand previous research by testing whether visiting non-enhancing websites affects an individual's capital-enhancing website use. I argue that these non-capital-enhancing websites provide men with greater incentive to use the Internet more often and serve as a pathway to use the Internet in capital-enhancing ways.¹ This places women at a disadvantage and suggests that Internet content itself is at least

¹ See Appendix Table B for the unstandardized coefficients showing frequency of visiting stereotypically male websites on gender and other controls.

partially responsible for the gender gap in capital-enhancing Internet use. Thus, I test whether non-capital-enhancing website visitation mediates the relationship between gender and frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website visitation. In other words, I examine whether using the Internet as a “toy” enhances an individual’s use of the Internet as a “tool.” Yet, I argue that it is not just non-capital-enhancing websites in general that attract a disproportionate number of men to use the Internet. Instead, I suggest that the *male-oriented*, non-capital-enhancing websites provide incentive for men to use the Internet more. Thus, as an extension to my previous argument, I also separate the non-capital-enhancing websites into two categories: male-oriented and gender-neutral websites. I then test specifically if the male-oriented website content or gender-neutral content mediates the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use.

- H4: Visiting non-capital-enhancing websites mediates the relationship between gender and frequency/variety of capital-enhancing website use.
- H5: Visiting *gender-neutral*, non-capital-enhancing websites does not mediate the relationship between gender and frequency/variety of capital-enhancing website visitation.
- H6: Visiting *male-oriented*, non-capital-enhancing websites mediates the relationship between gender and frequency/variety of capital-enhancing website visitation.

Data and Variables

The National Opinion Research Center has conducted nationally representative surveys of U.S households on a two-year basis since 1972. Similar to previous research

(Robinson et al. 2003; Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott 2005), I employ the GSS data module on Internet use for this analysis. In addition to the two waves used in prior research, I take advantage of a more recent wave, pooling three years of the data together (2000, 2002, and 2004). Thus, this study consists of adults (eighteen and older) who use a computer and browse the Internet at least occasionally (N=1771). In other words, all of the respondents in this study use a computer either at home, at work, or some other place and visit sites in at least one of the website categories listed by the GSS at least once a month. Additionally, I deleted any respondent answering that he or she had computer access but never visited any of the twenty-one website categories listed in the GSS.

Dependent Variables

The GSS (2000-2004) includes data on exposure to 21 types of websites (e.g. science, finances, cooking, or personal sites). I combine respondents' answers to these variables to form two indices for frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website visitation. The GSS module asks respondents how often they visited each type of website in the past month and gives four response options: 0, 1-2, 3-5, or more than 5. For the frequency of use index, I gave individuals answering in the 1-2 range a score of 1.5. If respondents chose 3-5, they received scores of 4 and those noting "5 or more" visits received scores of 7 (following previous research—Robinson et al. 2003).² I then sum the scores from each website to give

² I reran the analyses using scores of 6 and 10 for the "5-or-more" response category with little or no effect on my results.

each respondent a total frequency tally. Alternatively, for the variety index, if a respondent answered in the 1-2, 3-5, or more than 5 ranges, the respondent received a score of 1. Instead of measuring how many times an individual visits a particular type of website, a score of 1 represents simply having visited that type of site in the past month. Thus, I compute variety of capital-enhancing website visitation by summing these scores.

Measures of capital-enhancing website visitation used in previous studies vary somewhat. For example, Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott (2005), include government, news, politics, art, music, school, and work related sites. Robinson et al. (2003) include websites related to finances, school, education, work, news, government, politics, travel, and science. Lastly, Hargittai and Hinnant's (2008) index includes government, politics, news, finances, health, and product information sites. My final index for capital-enhancing website use represents a combination of the indices from previous research in order to create a kind of standard for future investigators to follow. It consists of finances, science, school, education, work, news, government, art, politics, travel, and health websites.³ Thus, for the analyses, my frequency of capital-enhancing website visitation ranges from 1-77 and the variety of visitation index ranges from 1-8.

³ To test the final hypotheses I examine the effect of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites on capital-enhancing website visitation. Despite the differences in what constitutes a capital-enhancing website, previous research mostly agrees on what represents non-capital-enhancing websites. However, slight differences remain in how investigators classify these sites as well. For instance, Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott (2005) include music websites in their enhancing group while Robinson et al. (2003) place these sites in their non-enhancing category. Wasserman and Richmond-Abbott (2005) also place health websites in their non-enhancing group while Hargittai (2008) includes them in the enhancing category. Yet given the literature on health as an aspect of human capital (i.e. Becker 2007), I consider health sites as capital-enhancing. Lastly, because I could not find a clear argument in one direction, music and religious websites are not included in the construction of either index.

Independent Variables

The main independent variable is a dummy variable for male with females as the reference for all of the analyses performed. The pooled sample between the three GSS years consists of 1771 respondents, 51.6% of whom are women. Like previous research (Kennedy et al. 2003), I measure gendered family household responsibilities with a continuous variable for number of children in the household. I also use dummy variables for marital status that include married (reference), never married and no longer married individuals (divorced, separated, or widowed) and a dummy variable for part-time labor force status (full-time status as reference). Together, number of children, marital status, and workforce status may better represent the possible effects of gendered household dynamics on capital-enhancing Internet use than number of children alone.

To test the final set of hypotheses I construct three indices, one that includes all of the non-capital-enhancing websites, and two indices that separate the non-capital-enhancing website category into frequency of visiting “male-oriented websites” and “gender-neutral websites.” The male-oriented website index ranges from 0-21 and represents sports, pornography, and game sites. Sports and pornographic websites likely need no explanation but for computer games, Cooper (2006) documents extensively how programmers often create games with boys in mind. For instance, much of the educational software in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s emphasized competition and hand-eye coordination and the content was usually sports, war, or space-themed. Alternatively, the index for visiting the gender-neutral,

non-enhancing websites ranges from 0-35 and represents humor, hobby, cooking, personal, and TV/movie websites. The complete non-capital-enhancing website index represents a combination of all the websites included in the male-oriented and gender-neutral indices. Thus, the non-capital-enhancing website index ranges from 0-56 (see Appendix Table A for lists of all the websites included in each index).

Controls

Men average close to 3 hours more time on the Internet per week than women (9.33 compared to 6.94). Therefore, I control for an individual's logged hours spent on the Internet per week (mean = 6.89 hours). I also follow previous research (e.g. Robinson et al. 2003) controlling for age, race, and GSS year. Lastly, I control for each individual's socio-economic index (SEI) which takes into account the income, education, and occupation of each respondent. In sum, Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the dependent, independent, and control variables.

Insert Table 1 Here

Analytic Strategy

I test all of the hypotheses using OLS regression. To test hypotheses 1 and 2, I estimate a baseline model that examines the effect of the dummy variable for male and controls for hours spent on the Internet per week, GSS wave, race, age of respondent, and

SEI on the frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website visitation. Then, to investigate hypothesis 3, I add the variables representing potential gendered household characteristics (marital status, number of children, and workforce status) to each model.

Models for hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 test whether frequency of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites mediate the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use even after controlling for hours on the Internet per week, GSS wave, race, marital status, number of children, and part-time work.⁴ Thus, I create a model that first tests whether visiting non-capital-enhancing websites mediates the relationship between gender and frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use. I then estimate two more models that assesses whether frequency of visiting *male-oriented* or *gender-neutral* non-capital-enhancing websites mediate the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website visitation. By assessing both of these potential mediators, I test the argument that male-oriented websites mediate the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use and not just non-capital-enhancing website use in general.

Findings

Table 2 presents the unstandardized coefficients from the regression models for both frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use on the gendered household

⁴ I checked correlation matrices, VIFs, and condition indices to test for multi-collinearity between the non-capital-enhancing indices and the capital-enhancing dependent variables but found no collinearity problems if I did not include age or SEI as controls. Note also that for the models testing hypotheses 4, 5, and 6, the mediating variables from hypothesis 3 become controls.

responsibility variables and controls. For variety and frequency of use, the models are nearly identical. In both baseline models, the coefficients for males are positive and significant and remain so even after the inclusion of the household responsibility variables. In fact, the household responsibility variables do little to increase the fit of the baseline model for frequency of capital-enhancing Internet use (R^2 increased from .2468 in Model 1 to .2482 in Model 2) and none of the variables (marital status, number of children, and workforce status) reach statistical significance. For variety of capital-enhancing Internet use, only the dummy variable for divorced, separated, and widowed individuals reaches significance but again, these variables do little to increase the model's explanatory power. Thus, the gendered household responsibility variables do not mediate the relationship between gender and frequency or variety of capital-enhancing website use.⁵

Insert Table 2 here

Table 3 presents unstandardized coefficients from the regression models for both frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use on the variables for frequency of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites. In Model 1 for frequency of capital-enhancing website visitation, the coefficient for males is significant. Inserting the variable for

⁵ In separate analyses not shown here I tested for interaction effects between gender and the household responsibility variables and found one significant result: never married women visit capital-enhancing websites more frequently than married women. Thus, there may be some evidence in support of Kennedy et al.'s (2003) claims that gendered household responsibilities prevent women from spending time on the Internet (or in this case, visiting capital-enhancing websites) as much as men. These analyses are available upon request.

frequency of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites increases the R^2 in Model 2 by 60% and the dummy variable for male no longer reaches significance.

Model 3 for capital-enhancing website visitation introduces the variable for frequency of visiting the non-capital-enhancing, gender-neutral websites. This variable is significant and positive and greatly increases the R^2 from Model 1. However, the coefficient for males remains positive and significant. In Model 4, the coefficient for visiting the non-capital-enhancing, male-oriented sites is significant and positive. However, in contrast to the results in Model 3, the dummy variable for males becomes insignificant after inserting the variable for visiting the male-oriented websites.⁶ Including the variable for frequency of visiting male-oriented websites also increases the model fit by 9%. Finally, similar to the results from Table 2, the significance levels and directions of coefficients for variety and frequency of capital-enhancing website visitation in Table 3 show consistent results.

Insert Table 3 Here

Discussion/Conclusion

The Internet has grown rapidly over the past two decades and researchers continue to discuss the potential benefits of Internet use depending on how it is used. Previous research suggests that a large part of the advantages from Internet use stem from visiting capital-

⁶ Normally, researchers would test the variables for male-oriented and gender-neutral website content in a step-wise fashion in the same models. However, I tested these variables in separate models because they are highly correlated at a level of .45.

enhancing websites that help individuals create human, social, and cultural capital or find information that helps them on the job market. Despite these prospective benefits researchers consistently find that women lag behind men in overall frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use (e.g. Robinson et al. 2003). This article extends the literature by testing two possible explanations for why this gender gap in capital-enhancing website use exists: 1) household responsibilities and 2) male-oriented website content. Ultimately, I demonstrate that male-oriented website content may be disproportionately attracting men to use the Internet more frequently and use it in capital-enhancing ways.

The results of my analyses affirm almost all of the hypotheses. Following previous research, hypotheses 1 and 2 show that men visit a wider variety of capital-enhancing websites and visit these websites more frequently than women. However, the proxy variables for gendered household responsibilities (marital status, number of children in the household, and work status) have no mediating effect on gender and frequency and variety of capital-enhancing website use. In other words, the household responsibility variables do not help explain the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use. Though these results negate hypothesis 3, researchers may still want to investigate the relationship between gendered household responsibilities and Internet use due to some positive correlations found in qualitative research on this topic (e.g. Selwyn et al. 2005). Additionally, the proxies used here may not sufficiently represent the intricacies of the gendered household division of labor so future studies should attempt to find alternative variables.

The final three hypotheses predicted the effects of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites on capital-enhancing website use. As expected, the variable for frequency of visiting non-capital-enhancing websites mediates the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use. On further examination, the results from table 3 show that the variable for gender-neutral, non-enhancing websites does little to mediate the relationship between gender and frequency and variety of visiting capital-enhancing websites. Instead, as predicted in hypothesis 6, the variable for frequency of visiting male-oriented, non-capital-enhancing websites mediates the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use. Thus, these results lend support to my arguments that it is not just non-enhancing content in general, but the male-oriented websites in particular that disproportionately target and attract men to use computers and the Internet, which in turn, contributes to their use of capital-enhancing websites. In other words, by enticing men to use the Internet as a “toy,” they eventually increase their use of the Internet as a “tool.”

While the results provide evidence for my arguments, I must note a few limitations of this study. First of all, the 21 websites provided by the GSS module do not exhaust the entire range of content found on the web. Notably absent are sites dealing with cars and the buying and selling of other products (e.g. ebay.com). Additionally, it could be argued that the GSS module misses important websites that we could stereotypically consider “female-oriented” like a more general variable for online shopping. Yet the general absence of “female-oriented” websites in the GSS is telling in and of itself. For instance, the only variable in the non-capital-enhancing category that arguably could be considered female-oriented is cooking

websites. Contrastingly, men have at least three male-oriented websites (sports, pornography, and games). In any case, even adding more stereotypically female websites like shopping might prove to be a moot point considering prior research shows mixed results for women shopping online more often than men. In fact, Kennedy et al. (2003) find that men actually do *more* online shopping than women. Thus, including more stereotypically female-oriented websites may not change any of my results substantively.

Another limitation may stem from the creation of the index for frequency of capital-enhancing website use. As previously stated, I created both the frequency and variety index from 21 website variables measuring Internet use in the past month. First, considering that a month is a fairly long time, respondents may not be able to accurately assess their total amount of website visitation. Furthermore, since the answer categories are a series of ranges, knowing the respondent's exact amount of time on the computer is impossible. I attempted to minimize these measurement issues by creating an index for variety of website use. The index for variety of use not only allows me to separate frequency from variety but it guards against some of these problems since the variety index simply measures having been to that website at least once. Furthermore, given the identical results across the indices (male-oriented websites mediate the relationship between gender and capital-enhancing website use), these measurement issues may not matter as much.

Other potential issues to consider include inability to control for 1) place of Internet access, 2) how people define the website variables, 3) reverse causality, and 4) potential spuriousness. First, the variable for hours on the Internet per week asks respondents to

include hours at home, at work, or in some other place (e.g. the library). Thus, I can only speculate as to how the place of access would affect the findings. For instance, someone who only accesses the Internet at work may refrain from visiting recreational websites out of fear of being seen as unproductive. Secondly, how people interpret the definitions of the various website variables likely differs as well. For example, one person's definition of a "finance" website might include only banking websites while another person may think of both banking and online stock trading websites. Third, some people may argue for reverse causality, meaning that capital-enhancing websites positively affect visitation to non-capital-enhancing websites. While I could make arguments for causality in both directions, I refer back to Tsai and Lin's (2004) findings that men most often see computers as toys and women view computers as tools. Thus, I argue that it is more plausible to think that visiting capital-enhancing websites is secondary to the more recreational uses of the Internet for men. Finally, though the content of websites may be disproportionately enticing men to use the Internet more, there may still be other factors that potentially explain the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use. For example, some research suggests that there may be gender differences in perceptions of self-efficacy and attitudes towards using the Internet. However, this literature reveals mixed results across studies (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008; Peng, Tsai, and Wu 2006; Tsai and Lin 2004). Furthermore, the results from this analysis and previous research (Barbatsis et al. 2004) suggest that differences in attitudes towards Internet use may derive from the amount of content geared towards specific groups.

Despite these limitations, my project furthers research on gender and Internet use in two ways: 1) elaborating and testing two potential explanations for the gender gap in capital-enhancing website use and 2) highlighting the effect of non-capital-enhancing websites (especially male-oriented sites) on capital-enhancing websites. The implications of my results reveal that we must take the content of the Internet into account and see how gendered websites advantage men over women. As the Internet continues to expand and many new types of websites appear, future research should concentrate on collecting more data to investigate these changes and their affect on the gender divide. For if individuals can use the Internet to garner concrete advantages financially, socially, and in the job market, then gendered website content becomes yet another barrier that disadvantages women from gaining equality in the public sphere. Without men creating websites that cater to women or more women entering computer-related fields and actively trying to create female-oriented websites, we may never see the disappearance of the gendered digital divide.

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TABLES

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>Dependent Variables and Mediators</i>		
Capital-Enhancing Websites (frequency, range 0-77)	22.154	14.172
Capital-Enhancing Websites (variety, range 0-11)	5.700	2.652
Non-Capital Enhancing Websites (frequency, range 0-56)	10.51	9.29
Non-Capital Enhancing Websites (variety, range 0-8)	2.93	1.95
Male-Oriented Websites (frequency, range 0-21)	3.897	4.318
All Other Non-Enhancing Websites (frequency, range 0-35)	6.616	6.522
<i>Independent Variables</i>		
Sex (Female is Reference)		
Male	.484	.499
Number of Children	1.352	1.346
Marital Status (Married is Reference)		
Never Married	.289	.454
No Longer Married	.202	.402
Work Status (Full-time is Reference)		
Part-time	.199	.399
<i>Controls</i>		
Hours on the Internet per Week (logged)	1.593	.988
Age	39.452	12.134
Socio-Economic Index	57.008	18.721
Race (White is Reference)		
Black	.107	.309
Other	.073	.261
GSS Wave (Wave 2000 is Reference)		
Wave 2002	.456	.498
Wave 2004	.239	.427

Table 2: Unstandardized Coefficients from OLS Regressions of Work and Family Characteristics on Frequency and Variety of Capital-Enhancing Internet Use

	Frequency of Use		Variety of Use	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<u>Sex</u> (Female is Reference)				
Male	1.680 **	1.709 **	.335 **	.345 **
<u>Work and Family Characteristics</u>				
Marital Status (Married is Reference)				
Divorced/Separated/Widowed		1.169		.267
Never Married		.415		.153
Number of Children		.187		.021
Work Status (Full-time is Reference)				
Part-time		-.755		-.076
<u>Controls</u>				
Hours on the Internet Per Week (log)	5.007 ***	4.980 ***	.781 ***	.772 ***
Age	-.000	-.016	-.006	-.007
Socio-Economic Index	.198 ***	.199 ***	.034 ***	.034 ***
Race (White is Reference)				
Black	-.810	-1.064	-.068	-.112
Other Race	1.082	1.075	.292	.289
GSS Wave (Wave 2000 is Reference)				
Wave 2002	.332	.345	-.204	-.201
Wave 2004	4.628 ***	4.748 ***	.694 ***	.716 ***
Intercept	.846	.951	2.516 ***	2.441 ***
Adjusted R ²	.22	.22	.17	.16
Model F	63.62 ***	42.69 ***	46.32 ***	31.16 ***

Note: N=1771. * (p<.05), ** (p<.01), *** (p<.0001), two-tailed test.

Table 3: Unstandardized Coefficients from OLS Regressions of Non-Capital-Enhancing Websites and Control Variables on Frequency and Variety of Capital-Enhancing Internet Use

	Frequency of Use				Variety of Use			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Sex (Female is Reference)								
Male	1.790 **	.585	1.473 *	.866	.350 **	.152	.297 *	.206
Non-Enhancing Websites								
Non-Enhancing Websites (frequency)		.470 ***				.078 ***		
Non-Male Oriented Sites (frequency)			.732 ***				.122 ***	
Male Oriented Sites (frequency)				.435 ***				.068 ***
Controls								
Marital Status (Married is Reference)								
Never Married	-.575	-1.625 *	-1.471	-1.014	.015	-.159	-.135	-.054
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	.869	.865	.804	.904	.196	.195	.184	.201
Number of Children	-.133	-.179	-.121	-.183	-.045	-.053	-.043	-.053
Work Status (Full-time is Reference)								
Part-time	-1.788 *	-2.237 **	-2.384 ***	-1.849 *	-.248	-.322 *	-.348 *	-.258
Hours on the Internet per week (logged)	5.128 ***	3.769 ***	3.693 ***	4.724 ***	.799 ***	.574 ***	.558 ***	.736 ***
Race (White is Reference)								
Black	-1.357	-1.085	-.599	-1.555	-.145	-.100	-.018	-.176
Other Race	1.273	.669	.575	1.129	.343	.243	.226	.321
GSS Wave (Wave 2000 is Reference)								
Wave 2002	-.098	.305	.169	.116	-.277 *	-.210	-.232	-.242
Wave 2004	4.811 ***	4.570 ***	4.279 ***	4.904 ***	.720 ***	.680 ***	.631 ***	.735 ***
Intercept	12.590 ***	10.742 ***	10.539 ***	12.100 ***	4.269 ***	3.965 ***	3.927 ***	4.193 ***
Adjusted R²	.15	.24	.25	.17	.11	.18	.19	.12
Model F	33.57 ***	50.74 ***	56.30 ***	33.98 ***	24.23 ***	36.01 ***	40.27 ***	24.21 ***

Note: N=1771. * (p<.05), ** (p<.01), *** (p<.001), two-tailed test.

APPENDICES

Appendix Table A: Description of Indices Created in the Analyses

Capital-Enhancing Websites

Finances, School, Education, Work, News, Government, Politics, Art, Science, Travel, and Health sites

*Non-Capital-Enhancing Websites**Male-Oriented Websites*

Sports, Pornography, and Games sites

All Other Non-Capital-Enhancing Websites

Humor, Hobby, Cooking, Personal, and TV/Movie sites

Appendix Table B: Unstandardized Coefficients from OLS Regressions of Gender and Other Controls on Frequency of Non-Capital-Enhancing Website Use

	Frequency of Use
<u>Sex</u> (Female is Reference)	
Male	2.766 ***
<u>Controls</u>	
<i>Work and Family Characteristics</i>	
Marital Status (Married is Reference)	
Never Married	1.845 **
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	1.259 *
Number of Children	.260
Work Status (Full-time is Reference)	
Part-time	.531
<i>Demographics and Other Controls</i>	
Hours on the Internet Per Week (log)	2.921 ***
Age	-.097 ***
Socio-Economic Index	-.060 ***
Race (White is Reference)	
Black	-1.061
Other	.918
GSS Wave (Wave 2000 is Reference)	
Wave 2002	-1.013 *
Wave 2004	.683
<u>Intercept</u>	11.208 ***
<u>Adjusted R²</u>	.18
<u>Model F</u>	32.35 ***

Note: N= 1771. * (p<.05), ** (p<.01), *** (p<.0001), two-tailed tests