

# Mum's the Wordpress: A Comparative Analysis of Political and Mommy Bloggers

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**Abstract:** *This research paper presents findings into the differences between two types of popular bloggers: the political blogger and the mommy blogger. These terms are recent entries to the lexicon of online communities, but are soon becoming distinct concepts. This paper shows that mommy bloggers rarely discuss the issues mainly associated with political bloggers, although the reverse is not always true. While political bloggers talk about family issues, this often has little to do with calling for their rights, but echoing sentiments relating to the family life of political public figures.*

**Keywords:** weblogs, blogging, mommy blogger, political blogger, genre, sub-genre, sysop prerogative, online communities

## 1 Introduction

A weblog, or "blog," is a genre of online community, where the posts comprise hyperlinks to articles, news releases, discussions and comments that vary in length and are typically presented in chronological order [1, 2]. These blogs are a source of human activity knowledge comprising valuable information such as facts, opinions and personal experiences [3]. Weblogs are a relatively new type of online community, and the community element of this technology exists when the owner, who is referred to as a *blogger*, invites others to comment on what they have written [4]. While the terms *weblog* and *blog* are used synonymously, the difference between the two is that a blog is intrinsically motivated based on the owners' own thoughts and emotions whereas the weblog is extrinsically motivated based on media that the actor has consumed and experiences the author has had with others. A weblog allows individuals to express their identities through its name and title, user profiles and about pages, posted content, and the visual design of the website [5].

## 2 Weblogs and the Public Square

The public sphere was once the preserve of wealthy businessmen, meeting in cafes, before mass media made information accessible to the masses. However, the emergence of the *public square* where only the elites could have access to publishing outlets is also now open up to the masses [6]. Weblogs have been the means by which many people have been able to express themselves online, in many cases accessible to the whole cyberspace. Weblogs have also been talked about as

a means of increasing literacy of the writers and facilitating communication between politicians and their constituents. Two prominent groups of weblog writers are referred to as the *political blogger* and the *mommy blogger*. The political bloggers' posts are usually expressions of their opinions and views or comments on topical issues. The mommy bloggers are characterised by their regular posts about family and community related issues important to many mothers, mums, moms and mams. Bloggers are always identifying against that which they do not identify [7]. Political bloggers are active in all parts of the world. Australian political bloggers and citizen journalists appear to have played an important role in the campaign leading up to the November 24, 2007 federal election [8]. Some have commented that despite the impact that influential American political bloggers have had on public policies and the mainstream media agenda in recent years, very little research is available on widely read political bloggers [9]. Mommy bloggers are known to be political at times when talking about their family. For example, one mommy blogger wrote on her site that while going through an Atlanta airport security checkpoint, federal transport agents separated her from her baby [10]. Some authors have argued that mommy bloggers are highly influential and in some cases beyond criticism because they use their children and betterment as their point of reference [11].

## 3 An Investigation

A total of 40 web-based communities from the genre of Weblog were selected for analysis. Twenty were selected from the BlogExplosion directory in the mommy blog sub-genre. Twenty were selected from Iain Dale's Top 100 Political Blogs [12] in the political blogger sub-genre. Noticeable from the Weblogs of the two sub-genres was the use of photographic artefacts. The mommy blogs tended to have pictures of their children, either what could be termed baby pictures or pictures of older children at parties and receiving presents. On the other hand, many of the political bloggers are photographed with politicians. These photographs could possibly act as character codes [13] for the dialogue as often the photographic artefacts are anchored with textual artefacts relating to them. A total of 16373 posts from the mommy blogger category and 173268 posts from the political blogger category were analysed. The posts were analysed to assess whether they contained 52 terms, 26 taken from the *Handbook of Parenting* [14] that were attributed to the mommy blog category and 26 taken from

*Politics: An Introduction* [15], which were assigned to the political blog category. Each of the blogs were assigned a score between 0 and 1 based on how much they kept to the 26 terms assigned to their sub-genre without deviating by using the 26 terms assigned to the other sub-genre. A summary of the results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean Number Posts and Scores for political and mommy blog sub-genres

Blogger Type	N	M Own	M Other	M Score
Mommy Blog	20	794.55	24.10	0.98
Political Blog	20	5576.45	3086.95	0.59

Performing an independent samples t-test of the data showed a significant difference between the two sub-genres ( $t=9.44$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). It was observable that most Web-based communities assigned to the mommy blog category did not deviate into using the terms assigned to the political blog category with a mean score of 0.98 ( $SD=0.03$ ) and posting a mean of 794.55 posts using their own terms and only a mean of 24.10 posts using the terms assigned to the political bloggers whereas those web-based communities assigned to the political blog category did deviate into using the terms assigned to the mommy blog category, scoring a mean of 0.59 ( $SD=0.18$ ) and posting a mean of 5576.45 posts using their own terms and a mean of 3086.95 posts using the terms assigned to the mommy blog category. A discourse analysis of the use of the 52 terms across the two sub-genres was carried out to discover whether there were observable differences in the cognitions of the actors that posted in the two sub-genres. A number of discoveries were made.

## 4 Discussion

Weblogs are a genre of online community where the posters present links to various other pieces of content or simply present their own opinions in articles which are typically ordered chronologically. While there is a lot known about this genre of online community, there is little published research on the sub-genres of weblogs, such as the political blogger and the mommy blogger. These are two distinct types of blogger, where the former expresses their opinion and shows their affiliation to political events and causes through pictures and text. The latter, on the other hand, describes events that occur within their family and often posts pictures of them and their community. This paper has presented solid evidence for the existence of these two genres by comparing the content of various political and mommy blogs. The data shows that political bloggers are less likely to post on the same topics as mommy bloggers, and mommy bloggers are the same with regards to political blogging. It suggests that even when they overlap, the context is different and clear to the defining characteristics of those sub-genres of weblog.

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