A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGN WEBSITES

DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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This work employs a discourse analysis of political campaign websites during the

2008 presidential election to determine what rhetorical strategies website designers used

to appeal to undecided female voters.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American political campaigns once relied solely on the mainstream media,

through television, radio and print, to disseminate a candidate's message by acting as the

primary vehicle of information about a campaign. However, today's candidates exercise

a great deal of control over their own messages by creating websites; utilizing popular

outlets such as YouTube to broadcast videos and commercials; creating profiles on social

networking sites; developing vast databases of cell phone numbers by promising breaking

information via text messaging; and by cultivating enormous numbers of ground troops

via email distribution lists. No longer do media conglomerates hold the keys to the

technological kingdom. This power now rests largely in the hands of those who are able

to harness the changing technology sweeping the country. An ever increasing number of

Americans connect to information electronically, through a variety of devices, many of

which are mobile. According to some estimates, seventy-eight percent of Americans now

own a cell phone, is in contrast to sixty-five percent in 2004. Popular use of mobile

smart phones, such as the iPhone, offers users a digital phone with internet access across

a widely available mobile network. As these mobile and multifunctional devices grow in

popularity, even more Americans will access information from the web in real time via portable devices.

Early in its history, computer technology was available only to those with specialized knowledge or those in higher income brackets who took advantage of advanced technological resources. A primitive computer was so large it could fill a room, and the internet was privately owned and operated. Apple and Radio Shack invented and popularized personal computers in 1977, revolutionizing the industry. Every year, new computers are produced that are smaller and faster than the models the year before, and Americans are taking advantage of widely available broadband access at home and work, carry phones that access the internet, and use social networking sites such as MySpace, Twitter and Facebook to stay connected with their friends and keep up with current events.

Websites are a pervasive form of communication, available to anyone with internet access, and are public in nature. Additionally, websites are rhetorically rich, requiring designers to make choices about every aspect of the site, including color, language, images, sound, and video. I chose to analyze campaign websites for this project, because they are technological documents and a primary venue campaigns use to promote their candidates, as well as mired in rhetorical choices designed to persuade a particular audience. A political candidate's website is a logical source for information regarding political ideology, personality, priorities, and a general sense of the person. Therefore, a campaign website contains information that is representative of the candidate and his or her "branding" that occurs across digital platforms and provides a broadly representative document for analysis.

According to Farkas and Farkas, "the Web requires us to organize information in new ways and to employ text and graphics differently than in other media. We now think much more about how people will access the information we are providing and how they interact with the information on the screen." (Farkas and Farkas 1) This idea of changing the way people organize information for access on the web means that web developers must give special consideration to a site's audience and the best way to provide information to this audience for maximum rhetorical effect. But, as Kristin Walker suggests, "The process of analyzing an internet audience is a difficult one, and it's even more difficult to design sites that appeal to the desired Internet community." (Walker 62) Walker also points out that it is necessary in website design to demonstrate "knowledge of social context in order to construct a site that reveals a complex awareness of audience." (Walker 62) What this means in broader terms, is that audience analysis is critical to the site creation, and misreading the audience can greatly harm a campaign by sending the wrong message to the right audience or vice versa.

An example of the importance of the concept of audience comes from the prolonged 2008 Democratic Primary, which produced a large group of deeply disappointed voters searching for a new candidate. Approximately 17 million votes were cast for the losing Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, and a substantial number of those voters were women. Once the Democratic primary was over, both party candidates, the winning Democrat, Barack Obama, and the Republican, John McCain, needed those votes to win the presidency. Each campaign employed an array of technological tools to reach this coveted audience, and their campaign websites provide a particularly compelling record of the rhetorical strategies they used to recruit votes from undecided

women voters. This thesis explores how both presidential candidates and their parties utilized their websites to appeal to those undecided voters and how these websites used rhetorical strategies to appeal to a specific target audience, particularly women. The question of how the sites appealed to women is important because fifty-three percent of voters in the 2008 presidential election were women. In fact, fifty-six percent of the people who voted for the winning primary candidate, Barack Obama, identified themselves as female. And, while not all voters visited the campaign websites, the messages contained in those sites are a prime example of the messages voters received through other media channels. This research questions how the websites for the major parties and their presidential nominees utilized rhetorical strategies that considered women as an audience and evaluates the results through a postmodern feminist theoretical lens.

Use of technology in political campaigns can have extraordinary consequences, whether because that technology helps a candidate connect with certain voters, or because it inhibits access to others. Technology is important for technical communicators to have an understanding of the rhetorical strategies political campaigns employ *via* their websites. This understanding could help close a gap in technical communication research that evaluates websites based on their visual design, but rarely targets political websites specifically. This information is critical, given the implications to all Americans during a presidential campaign where power can shift so dramatically from one candidate or party to another. Additionally, it is especially important to evaluate this information in a way that includes a feminist theoretical perspective, given the unprecedented and consequential role of women voters in the 2008 presidential

election. This thesis questions whether these political websites effectively employed strategies that appealed to women based on existing research pertaining to visual rhetoric and feminist theory, as well as whether they based their designs on general rhetorical strategies, as these strategies are currently understood.

Discourse Analysis

In an attempt to discover what rhetorical choices designers made regarding their female audience, I conducted a discourse analysis of the websites produced by the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the 2008 Democratic presidential nominee, Barack Obama, and the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, John McCain. The Obama and McCain websites are important because they represent the primary candidates in this election. I chose to include the major party campaign websites to determine how these sites approached increasing participation (particularly female participation) without the constraints felt by the candidates themselves. The primary candidate websites must walk a political tightrope in an effort to maximize participation and minimize alienation. However, party websites exercised more latitude by saying what the party candidate cannot. In essence, the party website can attack an opponent more aggressively than the candidate without the same consequences. In other words, the party's candidate can benefit from an attack without directly participating in it.

MacNealy describes discourse analysis as "a well-designed, systematic method of investigation." (124) MacNealy adds that "good research projects often arise from some kind of dissonance, such as a clash in beliefs..." (128) The fact that the parties responsible for these websites are in direct competition with each other and disagree ideologically on a number of issues makes the sites excellent sources for discourse

analysis. McNealy also states, "most tools for discourse analysis are based on one principle: categorization." (131) A systematic discourse analysis requires the researcher to develop a series of categories by which to analyze the "documents," in this case the political websites. Based on the subject matter, it is appropriate for the research to utilize categories derived from feminist scholarly literature, using the tools of website graphic design conventions.

Methodology

During the six weeks prior to the 2008 presidential election, I used video capture software to record a sampling of the aforementioned websites. The resulting rhetorical analysis evaluates the websites using generally accepted visual rhetoric conventions and explores whether developers created sites that specifically indicated they were designed for a complex female audience.

Given the current political environment, which puts so much power and control into the hands of female voters, a feminist theoretical perspective, such as postmodern feminist theory, provides a relevant lens to evaluate the campaign websites. The enormous popularity of Hillary Clinton and the enthusiastic yet controversial political interest in Sarah Palin understandably influenced both campaigns and both parties. Both candidates needed Clinton supporters to vote for them. Also, with the addition of a polarizing female running mate, John McCain focused attention on his own campaign in a powerful way. More than ever, these candidates attempted to appeal to female voters, who indeed may have decided the election. This type of lens focuses the analysis on how the sites encouraged women, in particular, to vote for their candidate.

Perhaps the most important element to this research is that a postmodern feminist perspective requires that the researcher recognize that women, while they are a sociological group, are subdivided by many other factors, such as race, class, and economic status. And, while it is possible to make some assumptions about women while researching, such as the gender of the researcher being an important element, nothing illustrates the importance of this feminist theoretical perspective more than the anomaly of Sarah Palin as John McCain's running mate. While much of the nation was waiting to see what would happen to Hillary Clinton's voters, the McCain campaign chose a woman diametrically opposed to Clinton in nearly every way imaginable. This choice led critics to ask if the McCain campaign thought that women as a group would vote for any female, regardless of her political perspective, simply because she was female. If this thought was the case, then it is possible the McCain camp let its candidate's gender override any other mitigating factors.

Structure

This research is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I introduces the research topic. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant scholarly literature addressing feminist theory in technical communication and how the techniques these scholars employed could be used to evaluate the political campaign websites. Chapter III provides a discussion of the methodology used in the analysis of these websites. Chapter IV discusses the results of the analysis, and Chapter V concludes the research and proposes further study.

This research project analyzes how four political campaign websites used rhetorical strategies. The purpose of the analysis is to determine if these sites were designed to appeal to women and, if so, whether they treated women as a homogenous group or as a complex and subdivided group. This distinction is important because women made up fifty-three percent of the overall presidential vote. Of those women, many were Clinton supporters who were undecided about their vote after Barack Obama defeated her in the primary. During the months following the Democratic nomination, neither the media nor political scientists knew how these undecided women would vote.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"In too many instances, the march to globalization
has also meant the marginalization of women and
girls. And that must change." --Hillary Clinton

Introduction

For much of this nation's history, a woman's place was in the home. However,

women have continually redefined traditional roles and diversified. While many women

still take care of the home and rear children, women also make up a significant portion of

the nation's workforce. As with any occupation, however, often one takes on new

responsibilities without shedding old ones. Working women are expected to contribute to

their household income and take on greater responsibilities in their professional lives, yet

powerful gender stereotypes persist, and they are expected to manage their homes as

well. While not all women face this dual expectation, many, by virtue of their sex, face

expectations by their spouse, their parents and their children to continue to submit

themselves to traditional gender roles, and at the same time, take on more traditionally

male professional roles.

In addition to taking on more professional roles, women have steadily gained

ground in the political arena. While there have been select female standouts, it was in

1992 that women made significant political gains. During the 1992 congressional

elections, sixty million women voters made their voices heard, and the House of

Representatives welcomed twenty-four new women to its ranks. That same year, the

Senate added five additional female senators.   In the years since, several women

have broken new ground, making significant progress. In New Jersey in 1994, Christine

Whitman became the state's first and only female governor. In 2000, Republican senator

Elizabeth Dole from North Carolina made a respectable run for her party's presidential

nomination. That same year, Hillary Clinton won a Senate seat representing the state of

New York. In spite of those accomplishments, no woman had independently received

widespread backing and financial support as a viable candidate for president.

This situation changed in 2008 when, during the presidential primary, a heated

battle took place between Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama for the Democratic Party

presidential nomination. Early in the process, Clinton was the overwhelming favorite,

amassing a small fortune in her campaign coffers and widely considered the inevitable

democratic candidate. Throughout the primary season, Clinton remained a formidable

opponent and, while Obama ultimately prevailed, never before had a woman come so

close to winning a major party nomination. In the wake of Obama's victory, millions of

American women were bitterly disappointed at the defeat and, in the end nearly

seventeen million Americans had cast their vote for Senator Clinton.

As the presidential election loomed, it became clear to the two major party

candidates—Barack Obama and John McCain—that those seventeen million votes would

likely be the key to the presidency. Both candidates had already launched sophisticated

websites, as did their national parties. This research project questions if and how those

websites were designed to appeal to the female voters who had cast their ballots for

Senator Clinton and to women in general. Making this determination requires viewing the websites through a feminist theoretical perspective, and the following is a review of the scholarly literature addressing feminist theory in technical communication and how these scholar's techniques could be used to evaluate these sites.

Feminist Theory in Technical Communication

Technical communication scholars waded into the waters of feminist theory in the wake of other social sciences. In an effort to evaluate to what extent technical communication scholarship has advanced the area of feminist research, Isabelle Thompson, in her article, "Women and Feminism in Technical Communication," conducts a qualitative content analysis of articles published in five technical communication journals from 1989 through 1997. Thompson focuses on thematic trends of feminism and establishes a set of rules consisting of a primary and secondary search of key terms and a third search to verify the first two. She arrives at a set of articles that she sees as inclusive but not exhaustive. Once she selects the articles, she analyzes them according to theme and concludes that "research about women and feminism has been accepted within the academic purview of technical communication as a discipline." (175) She is unsure, however, what effect this research has had in the classroom and advocates that change can come only by considering "all viewpoints and valuing all perspectives." (175)

Thompson follows up her article with a collaborative work coauthored by Elizabeth Smith called, "Feminist Theory in Technical Communication." This article extends the previous analysis to include the years 1997 to 2000 and took a more in-depth

look at "the interconnections between the articles and the sources that informed the
articles." Their goal was to learn more about the history of women and feminism in
technical communication and to see how "knowledge builds in our discipline." (441)
Smith and Thompson collected data using both qualitative and quantitative research
methods. They used a qualitative approach to expand upon the previous research and a
quantitative approach to add a citation analysis. Using these complimentary techniques,
they were able to analyze how "gender differences in technical communication …was
introduced, discussed, tested, and revised in our discipline." (469)

Thompson and later, Thompson and Smith, recognized that feminist research
already existed in other disciplines, but conducted their study to discover how feminist
research has been performed in the field of technical communication. Thompson's first
step into the arena combining technical communication and feminism provides a starting
point for later research of this nature. Without this critical first step, an analysis of this
type would have no history or foundation. Thompson and Smith shined a light on the
lack of research in technical communication pertaining to feminist theory and brought the
two together in a systematic and methodical way.

The authors collaborate a third time, revisiting the issue of feminist scholarship in
technical communication in, "Women and Feminism in Technical Communication—An
Update." This article is a direct continuation of Thompson's first article analyzing
feminist scholarship in technical communication. The goal of the article is "to determine
if scholarly interest in feminism and women's issues continues and if the themes
identified in the 1997 analysis are still relevant." (184) The authors conclude there is a
general decline in technical communication scholarship as it pertains to feminism and the

trend is toward a more postmodern feminist viewpoint, meaning that later feminist

scholarship was moving toward viewing women as complex individuals and not simply

stereotype-based females. This idea of complex feminism is very important when

analyzing political websites with an eye toward a targeted female audience. Particularly

because of the nature of the contest between a woman and an African American male,

one cannot ignore the intersection between race and gender.

In, "Emergent Feminist Technical Communication," Elizabeth Flynn breaks down

feminist theory in technical communication into four categories: liberal feminism,

structuralist feminism, radical feminism and postmodern feminism. She categorizes

several articles in *Technical Communication Quarterly* into the first two categories.

Flynn believes that feminist theory in technical communication is developing in much the

same way that feminist theory has developed in other fields, and that technical

communication could benefit in the future from a postmodern lens that "might attend to

race, class, and power in addition to gender." (319) Flynn believes that postmodern

feminism better attends to the depth and complexity of women's culture that are merely

generalized using liberal and radical feminist approaches.

While the previous articles are important in laying the foundation of feminist

research in technical communication and introducing the ideal of a complex sociological

female, it is Flynn's recommendation toward postmodern feminism that relates

particularly well to the process of this political website analysis. As an example, the

Republican presidential candidate, John McCain, chose a female running mate, whom

voters overwhelmingly rejected as a "replacement" candidate for Hillary Clinton. Voters

seemed to recognize that the two candidates, while both female, were very different from

each other. Women are generally considered a sociological group; however, to ignore the difference of race, class and other factors in a political setting could alienate the very voters whom the move was designed to attract.

In another example of the complexity of women as a subdivided sociological group, while white women identified very well with Clinton, the majority of African American women chose to support Barack Obama. This complex intersection of race and gender was a point of contention in a debate on NPR between Gloria Steinem, a pioneering feminist, and Melissa Harris Lacewell, a professor of Politics and African American Studies at Princeton. Steinem sparked the debate between the two with a controversial op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, entitled "Women are Never Front-Runners." In the article, Steinem posited that if Barack Obama were an African American woman running with the same credentials, Americans would never consider "her" a viable candidate for President. "Be honest: Do you think this is the biography of someone who could be elected to the United States Senate? After less than one term there, do you believe she could be a viable candidate to head the most powerful nation on earth?" Steinem seemed to assert that African American men had advanced in this country well before women and that there was a fundamental advantage to Obama based on his gender.

Lacewell, however, adamantly contested the idea that race and gender could be separated so cleanly saying, "I'm appalled by the parallel that Ms. Steinem draws in the beginning part of the *New York Times* article. What she's trying to do there is to make a claim towards sort of bringing in black women into a coalition around questions of gender and asking us to ignore the ways in which race and gender intersect." Lacewell

pointed out that, although African American men did have the right to vote before women, they were routinely lynched when they attempted to execute that right. Lacewell draws a distinction between the social history and construct of women of color and that of white women by pointing out that, as white women made advances in the workforce and turned over caregiving responsibilities to others, those responsibilities were not taken on my white men but by women of color and that the advancement of women of different races has not been equitable. The debate between these two women gives voice to the perceptual differences among and about women in this country. In this way, postmodern feminism continues to lend itself to this analysis as we recognize that race is a critical sub-section of women as a group.

Also advocating a postmodern point of view is Carolyn Boiarsky, et al., in "Men's and Women's Oral Communication in Technical/Scientific Fields: Results of a Study." Boiarsky examines women's communication styles, specifically how women use tentative language, interruptions, and collaborative approaches. Two surveys, administered in 1993 and again in 1994, were designed to evaluate "how women are faring as members of ...traditionally male-dominated fields and to learn what changes have occurred in the workplace as a result of women's entrance into it." (453) In her analysis of the surveys, Boiarsky indicates that "women do not form a monolithic entity, rather they differ in their attitudes and perceptions of their work experiences." (454) This concept of women being different from each other in their attitudes and perceptions is important when analyzing political websites and determining if their design strategies appeal to women as a diversified group or a single entity.

Sex, Gender and Design

Moving from a theoretical discussion to a practical application of theory is

Jennifer Bowie's dissertation, "Exploring User/Webtext Interactions: An Examination of

Gender and Sex Difference in Web Use." Bowie adopts the Bem Sex-Role Inventory by

removing "the (biological) sex from gender" and identifying behaviors "that are

considered by our society to be feminine and masculine based on gender/sex

stereotypes." (6) The Bem Sex-Role Inventory diversifies the concept of gender into four

categories: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Androgynous

individuals may be both masculine and feminine depending on the circumstances.

Undifferentiated individuals act in ways that are neither masculine nor feminine.

Bowie notes that recent scholarship advocates a "user-centered" approach to

design. However, she states, "While 'user centered' is a good idea, the notion of 'user' as

one single entity does not allow for differences, like age, sex, socially constructed gender,

culture, education and socioeconomic status, and so forth…" (8) Bowie points out there

is a significant gap in research that incorporates user-centered research with gender

differences. She worries that a "universal user" does not "fully represent the universe of

users." (8)

Bowie conducted her study using both qualitative and quantitative methods and

found sex difference in how users browsed, searched and surfed web texts. She found

gender differences in "navigation; orientation; time to begin and complete tasks; and the

ease of browsing." (xviii) Bowie concluded that significant differences in web text use

exist between sex and gender, and her research provides a new foundation for user-centered document design.

Bowie's research supports the idea that sex and gender play an important role in how people access and use web texts. That conclusion is important to this research, which questions whether the designers of these specific campaign websites adapted their web texts to a "universal" user or a specific audience based on sex and/or gender. The analysis of these sites addresses issues of language, but the idea of a gender difference in how women actually use a web text adds an extra layer of analysis.

Also drawing on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Bem's gender schema theory, is Maureen Hupfer, an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Michael G. DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University. Since, as Bowie points out, little research exists regarding web text and gender, it is necessary to incorporate relevant scholarship from other disciplines that logically applies to web text analysis. In "Communicating with the Agentic Woman and the Communal Man: Are Stereotypic Advertising Appeals Still Relevant?" Hupfer acknowledges advertiser's difficulties in "communicating with male and female audiences. (1) This difficulty is further exacerbated by the "increasingly blurred role distinctions [that] would appear to argue against the importance of gender as a marketing issue." However, she contends that the continuing debate about the relevance of gender may indicate gender is even more important than ever. (1)

Hupfer references relevant literature regarding a gendered approach to marketing and acknowledges, "[p]ractitioners appreciate the attractiveness of the lucrative female segment, but opinions concerning the best methods for communicating with women are

sharply divided." (1) At the height of the debate is the question of sex versus gender, which further complicates marketing strategies. However, she asserts that "researchers concluded that biological sex and psychological gender were linked so closely as to negate any predictive value associated with gender-identity measures." (3)

Bowie and Hupfer both reference studies indicating that women embrace a communal response to advertising that indicates a concern for themselves as well as others, while men tend toward self-concern and individual achievement. "While the male agentic orientation is described by personality characteristics such as self-reliance and independence, the female communal orientation is characterized by interpersonal affiliation and harmony." (3) However, as women's roles have changed, many advertisers are using a communal format but are "also targeting women with agentic appeals." (7) Advertisers now recognize that many women represent themselves as both caregivers and breadwinners. These advertisers are redefining their strategies as women redefine themselves. Hupfer concludes, "[w]hile males (assumed to be agentic) responded more favorably to agentic than to communal message manipulations, females (assumed communal) were persuaded by both kinds of appeals." (9)

This dual approach to targeting women as both caregivers and breadwinners fits well within the postmodern feminist theoretical perspective, which acknowledges that women are a complex audience and not easily defined. Determining whether the websites targeted women with a dual agentic and communal approach is an excellent question and will appear as a category during the analysis.

Women as Audience

While this research considers whether major political websites employ strategies that appeal to female voters, it is important to explore the idea of design as it applies to audience and audience analysis. Stephen Bernhardt, in "The Design of Sexism: The Case of an Army Maintenance Manual," compares two versions of an army publication, one from 1970 and the other from 1990, to evaluate how the visual design has changed in the twenty years between publications. The original document, rife with sexual innuendo common to the time, mellowed considerably in the later version. Bernhardt questions whether sexism in documents can be avoided since, "for those immersed in the culture, sexism can simply be difficult or impossible to see." (218) He stresses that sexism is much easier to identify in hindsight. Bernhardt acknowledges that the designers of this publication attempted to appeal to their audience of men. However, as that audience expanded to include women, the design changed. Bernhardt believes the intentions of the designers were well placed and many effective design techniques were employed. He concludes that, at the time the original publication was created, the army was following the advertising trend of the time: that sex sells. Information was presented to soldiers in a language with which they were familiar, using images designed to appeal specifically to them. Bernhardt is unsure if technical communicators can completely eradicate sexism in document design but believes they should do everything they can to avoid it. However, he believes that only the distance of time will determine if designers were successful.

Political websites must exercise care to avoid sexism. This assertion is true for all technical communication documents; however, the consequences of offending a particular group of people, such as fifty-one percent of the population, could be dire for

the candidate in question. To measure whether these websites avoid sexism, a set of

criteria, similar to those used in Bernhardt's analysis, could be effective in comparing the

four sites. Criteria relevant to web design include images of women in stereotypically

sexual guise, language designed to promote masculinity as the dominant voice, and

images depicting women in subservient or domestic roles.

Deborah Bosley also takes up the discussion of audience in her article, "Feminist

Theory, Audience Analysis, and Verbal and Visual Representation in a Technical

Communication Writing Task." Her empirical study attempts to determine how females

and males differ in their attention to audience by measuring eight factors of gender

influence. These factors are: 1) word count; 2) overall level of detail; 3) shape count; 4)

type of shapes (rounded vs. angular); 5) level of abstraction vs. level of detail; 6) attempts

to connect information; 7) established content; and 8) overall attention to audience. (294)

Bosley stresses, "the success of a technical document often rests on its ability to align

itself with the appropriate audience using the appropriate verbal and visual language."

(296) While Bosley hypothesizes that "females may be more attentive to the needs of

their audience during their writing task," (295) in this study she determines there is not a

gender difference in how these particular technical communicators considered their

audience.

While her findings did not support her hypothesis, the strategies for empirically

making that determination could be useful when analyzing political websites. Bosley

established particular criteria by which to measure the sites. By determining what

characterizes a productive website and how it effectively or ineffectively addresses its

audience is a valuable perspective. Attempting to determine level of audience attention,

combined with establishing authority, allows for an objective evaluation of the sites. Evaluating the sites using criteria believed to be important to women in general allows gender to be visible during the study.

Including Women in the Audience

In "Gender, Technology, and the History of Technical Communication," Katherine Durack discusses the absence of women in technical communication history, poses the idea that terms associated with technical communication are deeply gendered, and makes suggestions as to how to include women in the history of technical communication. Part of rewriting the history of the discipline means redefining technology in a way that includes women. Women have made essential contributions to technology but have been largely ignored by historians. Along with the assumption that women have not contributed to developing technology is the idea that they have not used technology in significant ways. However, rewriting this history to include women expands the definition of technology and makes the discipline far more inclusive. Durack insists, in order to "include women in the history of technical communication [we] must challenge the dualistic thinking that severs public and private, household and industry, and masculine and feminine labor." (257) It is important, therefore, to recognize women's contributions and use of technology when evaluating political websites. Do the sites use inclusive language that appeals to women as well as men? Do the sites address issues that matter to women as frequently as they do those that matter to men? Is there a difference between what matters to women and men?

In "Gender Issues in Technical Communication Studies," Jo Allen presents an overview of issues related to gender in technical communication. She speaks of a need to

take advantage of "all the intellect, productivity, and creativity at our disposal." (371) In recognition of the historically masculine predominance in business, she encourages women to "seek educations that will prepare them for the kinds of careers that will be needed to run our businesses in the twenty-first century." (371) Allen accuses technical communicators of ignoring a vast area of research and gender by not turning the critical lens on their own industry. She poses a number of questions to technical communication researchers, including whether there is gender bias, and if so, how it affects the work done by those in the industry. Allen asks how men and women in technical communication react to each other in various positions, ranging from peer to subordinate. She also questions whether gender affects collaboration.

Allen acknowledges, "the women's movement helped clarify that women are a group in the sociological sense." (379) It is appropriate, then to question whether political websites address women's issues and acknowledge women as an audience. Since sociological research has documented that "women's communication is, indeed, different from men's communication," (379) knowing how these websites address women and if they do so successfully is important information for technical communicators. However, Allen references Elizabeth Tebeaux's observations that work experience suppresses gender distinctions. If this is the case, should women as an audience be subdivided into other groups based on factors such as work experience and education? Even with a lack of empirical evidence that work experience eliminates gender differences in communication, Allen acknowledges that stereotypes persist. (383) Therefore, Allen encourages technical communication teachers to work with students in developing audience-analysis skills to help them recognize that "audience analysis [is] an

extremely complex matter that may have to accommodate gender and its effects on the readers' backgrounds, experiences, and expectations." (386)

Allen concludes that corporate culture is changing and that technical communicators must focus on encouraging "excellence, regardless of gender." (388) She encourages educators to include in their students' understanding of the workplace a recognition of diversity and a sensitivity to potential gender issues. These observations are important when analyzing political campaign websites because these site designers must acknowledge that while women are, generally speaking, a sociological group, this group is extraordinarily diverse, and analyzing women as an audience is a complex undertaking.

The importance of writing to an audience is not a new concept. In "Images of Women in Technical Books from the English Renaissance," Elizabeth Tebeaux and Mary Lay examine the way Renaissance writers adapted their style and content for women readers. They conclude that the writers, almost all men, wrote to their female audience and attempted to "use terms, examples, illustrations, and metaphors appropriate to their women readers." (206) Modern technical communicators must also be sensitive to their audience, recognizing that women, though a group, may come from varying educational and intellectual backgrounds. Communicators must be sensitive to this diversity. This issue is an important consideration in this analysis, as political website designers must design their sites to appeal to a vast audience with a varied and diverse background.

While scholars agree that audience analysis is an important element to content design, not everyone agrees on what constitutes inclusive language. In "Clearing the Air: Some Thoughts on Gender-Neutral Writing," Maryann Corbett explores the negative

outcomes of using gender-neutral writing and makes some suggestions as to how to do so successfully. She narrows the reasons for these poor outcomes to pronoun fatigue and being caught in the midst of a linguistic change. She makes several practical suggestions for avoiding gendered pronouns and recommends awareness in dealing with the change in linguistics. She holds, "we can produce good practical writing that is gender-neutral... [and] no one will have to alienate a portion of the intended audience...in the name of gender equity." (5)

An awareness of gender pronouns and changes in language is important to this political campaign website analysis. Designers must acknowledge their audience when constructing the sites and disseminating information, and must deal with changes in convention as well as recognizing what the individual users bring to the table.

Social Responsibility

Political campaign websites are powerful social tools. This distinction carries with it a responsibility because these sites encourage political and social participation. In her article introducing the special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* dealing with feminist research in technical communication, Linda LaDuc examines the complex issues facing feminist scholars and the responsibility of technical communicators as they grapple with the social responsibility of their work. "The Critical Eye, the Gendered Lens, and 'Situated' Insights—Feminist Contributions to Professional Communication" interweaves traditional feminist theory with new concepts and explores the idea of social responsibility. This idea of social responsibility directly relates to political campaign websites in that the information presented on these sites is intended to encourage

participation by educating and persuading voters in the direction of a particular candidate,

party or ideology. By doing so, these sites play a role in social and civic participation,

which may result in persuading voters regarding a particular candidate. The nature of

this decision could change the socio-economic course of a country.

Ultimately, the goal of political campaign websites is to encourage participation.

Laura Gurak and Nancy Bayer collaborate in "Making Gender Visible: Extending

Feminist Critiques of Technology to Technical Communication," where they attempt to

"make gender visible" by applying feminist critiques to traditionally masculine venues

such as science and engineering. (258) By pulling gender into the equation, the authors

hope to promote a "more participatory and democratic communication" particularly as

these concepts relate to "electronic communication technologies." (259) Gurak and

Bayer builds a theoretical framework comprised of four categories: rewriting the history

of technology to include women, redefining technology to include women's technology,

studying the ways technology affects women in the workplace and analyzing the

relationship of the human body to technology. (259) Of these categories, the last applies

directly to this research. Theoretically, electronic communication provides a medium in

which everyone may participate equally and democratically, collapsing gender

boundaries. (263) If this is the case, design becomes a key element in these cyberspaces

in maximizing inclusion and reducing the marginalization of previously marginalized

groups. According to Gurak and Bayer, this branch of their framework best represents a

"postmodern" feminism, which identifies gender as a "historical construct." (265) If this

construct is true, many questions arise, such as whether gender continues to be visible in

these cyberspaces and, if not, whether these non-gendered spaces do a disservice to

traditionally marginalized groups by allowing society to ignore gender altogether. The authors conclude their article by encouraging new models of design based on collaboration and inclusion.

Women and Authority

Part of encouraging participation means creating a sense of authority in text. In "Women and Authority in Business/Technical Communication Scholarship: An Analysis of Writing Features, Methods, and Strategies," Jo Allen analyzes a sample of women's scholarship in technical communication journals to explore the ways women create meaning in their writing and how they "develop a voice of authority." (271) Allen first addresses historical conceptions regarding differences in gender and writing, recounting the results of three studies addressing gender and technical writing specifically. She builds on these by taking "another step in assessing women's communicative strategies…to convey or create authority in their works." (272) Allen's methodology focuses on "woman-centered" scholarship, which asserts that women's experiences are worthy of study without a comparison to men's experiences. (273) (She does, however, suggest further research into men's experiences would be valuable as well.) Allen's research focuses on how women use particular writing features, such as hedges; whether they use personal references and experiences; and their rhetorical and design strategies, such as explicit thesis statements and using textual techniques, to make strong points. She uses these markers as standards by which to measure how women convey authority in their writing.

Allen's technique could be extremely useful and relevant in analyzing political websites. Conveying authority is a valuable tool in voter persuasion and, operating under the assumption that these sites aim to do just that, developing a standard of measurement by which to measure areas of the sites would allow for an empirical evaluation of said sites. Additionally, choosing criteria generally attributed to women's styles and techniques, based on the scholarly literature, would allow an analysis from a woman-centered perspective. Rhetorical strategies in technical writing are powerful tools in creating credibility and authority. Allen identifies strategies, such as using examples and testimonials; setting important information off from text using parenthesis or lists; and making strong and explicit thesis statements early in the document as strong rhetorical strategies for conveying authority. The use of such strategies could be applied to websites as technical documents as well.

Power and Responsibility

With the use of authority and persuasion comes a certain amount of power and responsibility. Kelli Cargile Cook, in "Writers and Their Maps: The Construction of a GAO Report on Sexual Harassment," examines a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report to determine how writers made rhetorical choices and how those choices related to power structures within the organizations involved. Cook uses postmodern mapping theories to build a visual construct of the report and to analyze the decisions made about, and the consequences resulting from, the report. Cook positions herself in the analysis as being influenced by her own values and sense of audience awareness.

(73) She speculates that "government writers often do not fully understand their reports' social impact or the consequences of their recommendations...." (55)

The act of creating consequences is particularly relevant to technical communicators who may, in the course of their work, design web sites that seek to persuade. An example of the importance of consequences would be a major campaign political website whose candidate is vying for the most powerful political office in the country. If the website successfully persuades voters toward the candidate, the candidate's subsequent policies could change the course of a nation and, perhaps, the world.

Cook builds her map by analyzing five points of interest: the point of departure; the writer's mapped route; the social and political landscape; detours; and destinations. She acknowledges in her conclusion, however, that this map was drawn based on her own objectives and could have been constructed a number of different ways. Ultimately, her message to technical communicators, is "each time we select or privilege information within our reports, we act with power." (74)

Cook's mapping strategy, modified to analyze political websites, explores the power of audience instead. Politically speaking, the power in this country rests ultimately with the people. Did this power influence the design of the websites? Was a particular group more influential than others? These questions bear consideration when using a postmodern mapping approach.

Conclusion

The political campaign websites for the major candidates and their parties in the 2008 election offer a broad canvas for rhetorical analysis using a feminist theoretical perspective. Based on the scholarly literature, a postmodern feminist approach appropriately frames the analysis to evaluate what rhetorical strategies these sites employed to create a sense of authority and to persuade female voters. A discourse analysis employing a predetermined set of criteria based on the relevant scholarly literature offers a flexible, yet reliable method of data collection to determine what strategies would be appropriate in attracting female voters and whether these strategies were successfully deployed.

In *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing*, Mary Sue MacNealy observes there is no "single correct way of analyzing discourse." But she indicates that most discourse analysis is based on categorization. (131) When creating categories, MacNealy specifies they should be of sufficient number to "make meaningful distinctions between the data." (133) The categories should also be chosen so that data easily fits within them.

MacNealy further breaks down discourse analysis into four constructs: style, structure, rhetorical strategies, and semantic information. Of these four, rhetorical strategies is the category used most often to investigate persuasive techniques. Therefore, a rhetorical discourse analysis is an appropriate construct to determine if the four political campaign websites used strategies designed to appeal to women.

This research consists of a rhetorical discourse analysis of four political campaign websites from the 2008 presidential election. The categories for analysis are based in

literature pertaining to feminist theory in technical communication as well as literature

pertaining to rhetorical strategies for website development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

Like most Americans in the months leading up to the 2008 election, I found myself swept up in the excitement of the competition between the primary candidates from both parties and the realization that the election would make history, regardless of the outcome. The mood in the country was pensive as George W. Bush's term was ending. The President was exiting office with an all-time-low approval rating. The war in Iraq seemed without end and was quickly losing popularity. Americans were eyeing the upcoming election with renewed interest.

On the Democratic side, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton engaged in a prolonged and heated contest for their party's nomination. The battle raged into the summer, with the two exchanging primary victories, and did not end until Clinton finally conceded in early June 2008. On the other side of the aisle, Republican John McCain, already the party nominee, secretly selected Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska, as his running mate. This move was to spark enormous controversy and, ironically, re-energize the Republican Party. It was clear to all who were watching that, regardless of who won the primaries and later the general election, one of the country's two highest offices would be held by either an African American or a woman. History would be made.

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By the time Hillary Clinton withdrew from the primary race, she had amassed over seventeen million votes. Exit polls indicated a majority of voters in the primaries were women. Both Obama and McCain would need to win over Clinton's supporters in order to win the election. As I contemplated the power shift of the election from the general population into the hands of American women, I began to wonder what rhetorical strategies the candidates would use as they continued to campaign. Would they target women voters in a meaningful way? Would they lump all women together in one category? Would they try to appeal to women as a diverse group, with many different traits and characteristics? Or would they ignore women altogether and simply attempt to appeal to a "universal" voter, gender-free?

Discourse Analysis

Mary Sue MacNealy defines a discourse analysis as a "systematic method of study, including empirical techniques" that relies on a "well-designed, systematic method of investigation." (124) MacNealy points out that researchers, "often study the effects of text structure and content on audience emotions and beliefs." (126) MacNealy stipulates that, in a discourse analysis, the "tools for discourse analysis are based on one principle: categorization." (131)

I conducted a discourse analysis of the two major candidates web sites in an attempt to answer the primary research question, "What rhetorical strategies did campaign websites employ to appeal to women voters?" According to Farkas and Farkas, "enormous numbers of groups and institutions…are advancing their own viewpoints and agendas" using websites. Websites are dense with text and imagery and

require designers to make countless rhetorical choices. I also include in my analysis the major party websites. My rationale for adding the Democrat and Republican Party websites was that I might find a rich balance between the four sites that I would not necessarily find by only examining the candidate sites. In my opinion, the party sites would be less inhibited than the candidate sites, able to be more aggressive and forthright without walking the fine line of diplomacy required by the candidates themselves.

By conducting my analysis using a feminist theoretical perspective, I capitalized on the burgeoning level of female participation during the primary season and explore how the candidates addressed attracting the undecided women voters. Attaching a post-modern feminist perspective to the analysis allowed me to further investigate how the candidates sought out not just women, but women as a sociological group comprised of many unique components, including a variety of factors such as race, education, and social class.

Because this analysis focuses on women as the end user of the websites, the concept of audience becomes very important. According to Farkas and Farkas, web designers must "carefully analyze the intended audience (of a website)." (28) Additionally, designers must segment and prioritize their audience. (30) The designer, after making a determination about audience, must consider theme and style. Theme connects the core message to the audience, and style helps to express the theme. Based on MacNealy's categorization technique, I created categories for analysis based on the content and the design elements of the sites.

The following categories are designed to evaluate the content of the websites based on their appeal to women, not only as a gendered group, but also by determining if

the sites appear to be targeting specific types of women based on demographics, education, or race. In addition to the general design standards listed above, which were developed using the principles prescribed by Farkas, et al., I will analyze the content types using a postmodern feminist theoretical strategy, which will ask specific questions that in turn make up the categories.

Graphic Design

The graphic design of a website utilizes certain composition principles to facilitate disseminating information to a target audience. The following composition principles, as outlined by Farkas, et al., aid understanding the design elements instrumental in creating a message. Knowledge of these design elements aids understanding of how the site answers the research questions, which I have converted into categories. For example, where a designer places a graphic on a webpage gives an indication of what value he or she places on that object and its intended audience. By synthesizing basic composition elements with the following categories, I will analyze the four websites combining the design elements with feminist scholarly literature.

Composition Principles

1. Emphasis

      a. Location (top for emphasis, low not important, left conspicuous)

      b. Size (larger items more prominent than smaller ones)

      c. Contrast and surrounding blank space (contrast is emphasis)

      d. Distinctiveness (objects that are different stand out)

e. Depth (3-d adds emphasis)

f. Movement (movement attracts attention)

g. Interesting Content (quality content)

2. Grouping (establishes logical relationships between elements)

3. Subordination (size/indentation)

4. Simplicity (restricts visual data)

5. Proportion and Scale (pleasing relationships dimension/size)

6. Balance (pleasing composition)

7. Unity (elements fit together as a whole)

Categories

Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter II, I developed the following eight

categories, appearing below in question form.

1. Does the site design maximize inclusion of and reduce the marginalization of

   women? Are women included as equal participants? Is gender visible throughout

   the site, or does the site ignore gender? (Gurak and Bayer)

2. Does the site acknowledge women as an audience? Does the site further

   subdivide women based on other factors? (Allen, Bioarsky)

3. Does the site appeal to women visually? How do the graphics and other visual

   elements target women? Is the targeting done is a negative or positive way?

   (Berhardt)

4. Can sexism be avoided? Bernhardt submits that sexism can only be seen after time has passed because the standards of measuring sexism change with the social times. Do the sites contain evidence of sexism? (Berhardt)

5. Does the site use inclusive language (i.e., feminine pronouns)? (Corbett)

6. Are the navigational tools on the site designed to appeal to both sexes? Since women use landmarks and prefer browsing, while men use search engines and, depending on the circumstances, women may be inclined to use both, does the site target women based on its navigation design? (Bowie)

7. Does the site present information about the candidates suggesting individual achievement or do they emphasize the candidate as a member of a community? Hupfer and Bowie suggest that males are drawn toward individual achievement, while females are generally more concerned with community. (Hupfer and Bowie)

8. Does the site use a combined approach of both communal and agentic to target females? Hupfer suggests this strategy targets women of different demographics, breaking down family and career and launching a combined approach.

The Process of Analysis

To evaluate the sites based on the above criteria, I used video capture software called Camtasia, manufactured by Techsmith, to record the sites in the weeks leading up to the election. I visited all four sites on October 6, October 15, October 22, and October 31, 2008. Since the sites contain extensive content, I analyzed the home pages or all four sites, as well as interior web pages that overtly appeared relevant to women, such as the

"Pink Elephants" on the Republican Party site. I attempted to choose pages across the four sites that seemed similar in nature, in order to compare and contrast them in a relevant and equal way. Inherent in only analyzing the home pages and the pages specifically targeting women is a limitation to this research. Each site contains dozens of papers and hundreds of lines of text and graphics. Numerous combinations of pages could have been analyzed and produced a myriad of results. However, I decided to analyze the home pages and the "women's" pages because they appeared consistently across all four of the subject websites.

Categories

In order to systematically evaluate the web pages from the four sites, I created a matrix divided into categories based on the questions listed above.

Content Design Categories	Notes
1. Inclusion/Marginalization	
2. Women as Audience	
3. Visual Appeal to Women	
4. Sexism	
5. Language	
6. Navigation	
7. Community Emphasis	
8. Dual Emphasis	

After recording the web pages, I printed each relevant page from each date in order to create a static document. Printing the pages allowed for ease of study. I then moved through each page using the matrix above, answering the questions and making notations regarding my observations. I made observations based on the literature

provided in Chapter II and viewed all questions through a feminist lens, meaning how

does the question relate to, by, and about women? The results of this analysis appear in

Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter provides the results of a discourse analysis of four political campaign websites during the 2008 presidential election. The websites analyzed were the Barack Obama, John McCain, Democratic Party, and Republican Party websites. This chapter is divided into sections by website. Following an introduction to each website, each section addresses all eight categories, presented in question form, developed from the literature in Chapter II and discussed in Chapter III. Each section also begins with some notes and observations regarding the hierarchy of the site as developed using the drop-down menus that appear across the top of each page on each site.

Barack Obama Web Site

<u>Introduction</u>

The first step in my analysis of the Obama website was to create a site hierarchy, which can be found in Appendix A. This hierarchy was created using the drop-down menu at the top of the home page. The drop-down menu appears on all pages of the site. The tab "Women" appears in two places, under the "Issues" tab and under the "People" tab. The tabs appear to be listed in alphabetical order, so the tabs pertaining to women appear at the bottom of both lists.

Next, I examined the home page, top to bottom, on all four dates recorded: October 6, October 15, October 22 and October 31, 2008. As I examined the pages, I answered the eight categorical questions in order, basing my results as closely as possible on my understanding of the relevant literature from which I developed the categories.

1. Inclusion/Marginalization

Does the site maximize inclusion of and reduce the marginalization of women? Are women included as equal participants? Is gender visible throughout the site, or does the site ignore gender?

I examined the October 6, 2009 Obama home page. On the left side of the page, above the scroll line, is a video clip. The thumbnail for the clip is of a woman holding a sign that says "change." (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Obama Home Page – October 6, 2009

Below the video clip and below the scroll line, on the right hand side, is a picture of

Hillary Clinton. (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Obama Home Page (Bottom) – October 6, 2008

Toward the bottom of the page is an "Events" section, and in that section is an October 7,

2009 Community Event with Michelle Obama.

On October 15, October 22, and October 31, 2009, the same images of the video

clip and the Hillary Clinton photo are in essentially the same location, although slightly

farther down the page. Michelle Obama's name appears in the events section on all three

subsequent dates. On October 22, 2009, featured prominently at the top left of the home

page in a tab is a video titled, "Learn About the Violence Against Women Act." (Figure

3)

Figure 3. Obama Home Page (Top) – October 22, 2008

Also on October 22, 2009, in the "Events" section, is a reference to a rally featuring

Senator Clinton and another rally featuring Michelle Obama.

According to Farkas, et al., a designer emphasizes a subject by placing it in the

top left corner of the page. Placement is also a priority when an item is above the scroll

line, meaning it is in full view when the page loads. While clearly gender is visible on all

four of the Obama home pages, the placement of the items indicates their importance

relative to other items on the page. The fact that the "Change" video is visible or at least

partially visible when the page loads indicates it is an important component, although its

placement on the right side of the page indicates relatively less importance. The

"Violence" video, on October 22, 2009 is featured more prominently, although it is one

of four tabs in that section. However, it is easily accessible, and the title is on the left

toward the top of the page; the issue is important for women.

The second page on the Obama site that I evaluated for this category was the

"Women" tab under "Issues." This page is extremely long, covering a range of issues

divided into categories. These categories include: Health Care, Reproductive Choice,
Preventing Violence Against Women, Economic Issues, National Security, Poverty, and
Education. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4. Women for Obama Page – October 6, 2008

Gender is visible on the Obama home page in the form of graphics, video, and
text. References to women appear in all quadrants of the page, indicating varying
degrees of emphasis the designers place on a particular object. The "Change" video
appears less prominently on the right side of the page, but appears on multiple pages and
generally at or above the scroll line, which indicates a reasonably high level of
importance.

Gender is also visible on the "Women" page, under issues. The page is very long and makes numerous references to women throughout. Also on this page is the "Change" video, which is placed on the right side above the scroll line. While gender is highly visible on this page, I did note the content of the page does not change from October 6, 2009 through October 31, 2009.

2. Women as Audience

Does the site acknowledge women as an audience? Does the site further subdivide women based on other factors? (Allen, Bioarsky)

On the Obama home page on October 6, 2009, while there are two graphics depicting women, both women are white and approximately the same age. The woman in the video appears to be in her fifties and is standing in front of an Airstream trailer. This type of trailer is expensive and indicates a particular economic standing. The other photo is of Hillary Clinton, also an affluent woman over fifty. However, on the October 22, 2009 page, the image of the woman in the "Preventing Violence" video is of a young Latina. Based on these visual images, while the site does acknowledge women as an audience, there is a relative lack of ethnic diversity depicted on the pages.

In contrast, the "Women" tab under "Issues" covers a wide range of issues, easily encompassing a variety of female sub-groups. For example, under the "Health Care" section appear the following articles: Fixing the Nation's Health Care System, Empowering Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS, Supporting Research into Women's Health, Fighting Cancer, Reducing Health Risks Due to Mercury Pollution, and Supporting Stem Cell Research. Each of these issues could easily appeal to different types of women.

On the "Women" page, the designers use bold face type to emphasis the subject matter and, following standard design principles, the items are listed in order of perceived importance. For example, "Fixing the Nation's Health Care System" is first on the list, indicating by its priority placement that the designer considers it a highly important issue.

3. Visual Appeal to Women

Does the site appeal to women visually? How do the graphics and other visual elements target women? Is this targeting done is a negative or positive way? (Berhardt)

Visually, the Obama home page offers few images of women; however, the images are consistent. As previously noted, the images of Hillary Clinton and the thumbnail image of the woman in the video are similar in demographics and offer a favorable image of white, affluent women. These images are positive for women who see themselves in these women. The image of the women in the "preventing violence" video on October 22, 2008, is of a Latina woman. Whether this image is a negative stereotypical assumption that only Latina women suffer abuse, or an attempt to target a group of women by singling out an issue and telling a positive story of survival is a difficult question. Some women may identify readily with her story, while others may take offense at the insinuation that women of other races and demographics may not be victims of abuse as well. Visually, however, the image is positive in that the woman is smiling and seems to have overcome great adversity.

On the pages that deal specifically with women's issues, very few images of women appear. The thumbnail of the woman in the "Change" video is ever present, but most of the information on these pages is in textual form. In fact, the prominent images

on these pages are of Obama and Biden at the top of the page, positioned importantly in the top left corner.

4. Sexism

Can sexism be avoided? Bernhardt submits that sexism can only be seen after time has passed because the standards of measuring sexism change with the social times. Do the sites contain evidence of sexism? (Bernhardt)

Bernhardt questions whether sexism can be avoided because designers are immersed in their own time and often cannot see sexism until social changes occur at a later date. However, he does believe that designers need to be aware of sexism and try to avoid it.

The Obama site hierarchy puts special emphasis on the wives of the candidates by placing their names directly under their husbands' names in the menu. I questioned whether this placement was a traditionally sexist move—having the wives one step behind their husbands. However, the candidates are the primary focus of the site and should take priority. It is interesting that Michelle Obama's name appears behind her husband's name, but before the vice presidential candidate, Joe Biden. Given the choices of where to put the names, grouping the couples together indicates there is a partnership between the spouses and seems appropriate in light of the other possible placements.

On the Obama home pages, I did not notice any images or text that seemed sexist in nature. Most of the text on the pages targets current issues important to all Americans and does not seem to target women or men particularly. On the "Women's Issues" pages, the long list of issues does appear to target women, but not unfairly. In fact, some of the

language on these pages acknowledges that women have been marginalized and offers

positive language in response. For example, the follow headlines (Figure 5) provide an

example of such language:

Empowering Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS:

In the United States, the percentage of women diagnosed with AIDS has quadrupled over the last twenty years. Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. Women of color are especially hard hit: In 2004, HIV infection was the leading cause of death for African-American women between the ages of 25 and 34. Around the world, 7,000 women are infected with HIV every day. Barack Obama has been a leader in the global fight against AIDS. He introduced the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women in the battle against AIDS. Microbicides are a class of products currently under development that women apply topically to prevent transmission of HIV and other infections.

Supporting Research into Women's Health:

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, accounting for nearly 39 percent of all female deaths. Studies show that after a first heart attack, women are less likely than men to receive diagnostic, therapeutic, and cardiac rehabilitation procedures, and are more likely to die or have a second heart attack Women are also more likely than men to report having arthritis, asthma, autoimmune diseases, and depression. Health care disparities among minority and poor women are especially pervasive. Barack Obama has fought to maintain funding for the Centers of Excellence in Women's Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. He also supports legislation to encourage research that will examine gender and health disparities. The same legislation would establish community outreach programs in underserved areas to help women access health care and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Fighting Cancer:

Ovarian cancer is the fourth-leading cause of cancer-related death among women in the United States. Because of the lack of early symptoms or a proven screening test, ovarian cancer also has the highest mortality of all cancers of the female reproductive system. Barack Obama is an original co-sponsor of Johanna's Law. Signed into law in January 2007, the law will educate women and increase awareness of ovarian cancer. Obama has also supported efforts to combat breast cancer, another leading cause of death among women. He helped pass legislation in the Illinois State Senate to expand insurance coverage for mammograms.

Figure 5. Women for Obama Page - Issues

Words like "empowering," "supporting," and "fighting" are positive examples of

language directed at women, implying they have not been empowered or supported in a

strong way by their government, and the designers seem to be acknowledging a need for

a strong stance of support of women. Under each headline is a strong statement

providing statistical information regarding the paragraph topic. These statements provide

validity to the "problem" addressed in each section and acknowledge the subject's importance. Giving this type of support to issues inherently important to women indicates the page authors made an effort to give importance to the topics and avoid sexism.

5. Inclusive Language

Does the site use inclusive language (i.e. feminine pronouns)? (Corbett)

The Obama home pages appear to address their comments to the user in a first and second person format, rather than a third person format. For example, instead of using him or her when addressing the audience, the site uses language such as "us", "we", and "you." An example follows in Figure 5. At the top of the page the quote by Obama says, "I'm asking you to believe." Later in the page, under the "Announcing the start of GOTV Calling" the writer address himself in the first person and addresses the reader as "you."

Figure 6. Home Page – October 31, 2008

Other language on the page follows the same format. At the bottom of Figure 6 on the left is the headline, "Announcing the start of the GOTV calling." In the text, the author uses the second person and addresses the reader as "you." This tactic avoids the use of male or female pronouns and allows the reader to assign gender.

The "Women's Issue" pages feature appropriate language targeting women. Words such as "women" and "female" appear frequently on these pages. Also frequently used is the word, "American" or a derivation such as "Americans." It appears the page designers are strongly acknowledging women but also acknowledging that women are part of a larger group of Americans.

Farther down the page, a headline under "Preventing Violence Against Women" reads, "Fighting Gender Violence Abroad." See Figure 7.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Reducing Domestic Violence:

One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Family violence accounted for 11 percent of all violence between 1998 and 2002. Barack Obama introduced legislation to combat domestic violence by providing $25 million a year for partnerships between domestic violence prevention organizations and Fatherhood or Marriage programs to train staff in domestic violence services, provide services to families affected by domestic violence, and to develop best practices in domestic violence prevention.

Strengthening Domestic Violence Laws:

Approximately 1,400 women a year – four every day – die in the United States as a result of domestic violence. And 132,000 women report that they have been victims of a rape or attempted rape, and it is estimated that an even greater number have been raped, but do not report it. Senator Obama co-sponsored and helped reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Signed into law in January 2006, the bill funds and helps communities, nonprofit organizations, and police combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The legislation establishes a sexual assault services program and provides education grants to prevent domestic violence.

Fighting Gender Violence Abroad:

The genocide in Darfur has had particularly devastating consequences for women. Tens of thousands of women have been killed, raped, and displaced since the conflict began in 2003. Barack Obama has been a leading voice in Washington urging the end of genocide in Sudan. He worked with Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) on the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, a version of which was signed into law. Obama has traveled to the United Nations to meet with Sudanese officials and visited refugee camps on the Chad-Sudan border to raise international awareness of the ongoing humanitarian disaster there. He also worked with Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) to secure $20 million for the African Union peacekeeping mission.

Figure 7. Women for Obama - Issues

Both Bowie and Hupfer draw an important distinction between sex and gender, so the use of the word "gender" in this headline is interesting. However, there is no reference later in the article to gender, only "women." It is possible this word choice was merely an attempt to vary language and not a reference to the sex versus gender debate. The choice, however, does indicate inclusiveness in the language the designers chose for the page.

6. Navigation

Are the navigational tools on the site designed to appeal to both sexes? Since women use landmarks and prefer browsing, while men use search engines and, depending on the circumstances, women may be inclined to use both, does the site target women based on its navigation design? (Bowie)

Generally speaking, web designers often place links to important interior pages in several locations on the site, because site visitors may notice one link and not the other. Also, in general, most sites provide a search box somewhere near the top right side of the page. I did not find a search box on the Obama home page. See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Obama Home Page – October 31, 2008

Not only did I not find a search box in the most likely location, I did not find it on the page at all for any of the dates recorded. The navigation bar with drop-down menus at the top of the page was consistent throughout the dates recorded, and the page was

divided by topic and easily navigated. However, according to Bowie and Hupfer, men tend to prefer a search option while women look for a variety of navigational landmarks. Based on the literature, this design should appeal more to women than men.

7. Community Emphasis

Does the site present information about the candidates in a way that suggests individual achievement or do they emphasize the candidate as a member of a community? Hupfer and Bowie suggest that males are drawn toward individual achievement, while females are generally more concerned with community. (Hupfer and Bowie)

The Obama home pages use a combination of personal achievement and community involvement, but leans toward personal achievement. There are numerous references on the October 6, 2008 home page to Obama, alone. "I'm asking you to believe." appears at the top of the page on the left. "ObamaBlog", "Barack TV", "Obama details his plan" and "Obama calls for immediate action" are representative of text that singles Obama out as the candidate and focuses on his statements and his ideas. However, on the October 15, 2008 home page, phrases appear such as, "Change we Need", and "Community Gathering" appear multiple times on the schedule. See Figures 9 and 10.

OTHER EVENTS

Oct 15   "Change We Need" Rally with
        Michelle Obama
        in FORT WAYNE, IN

Oct 15   Community Gathering with Joe Biden
        in NEWARK, OH

Figure 9. Other Events

Oct 15   Community Gathering with Joe Biden
           in ATHENS, OH

Oct 15   Community Gathering with Joe Biden
           in LANCASTER, OH

Oct 16   Community Gathering with President
           Bill Clinton
           in CLEVELAND, OH

Oct 17   "Change We Need" Rally with Barack
           Obama
           in ROANOKE, VA

Figure 10. Community Events

While there are numerous references to Obama as an individual, there are some

references to community and inclusive pronouns. Based on the literature, the Obama

home pages use language promoting individual achievement that would appeal to male

users, but also uses inclusive language in the calendar section, which would appeal to

female users.

8. Dual Emphasis

Do the sites use a combined approach of both communal and agentic to target females?
Hupfer suggests that this strategy targets women of different demographics, breaking
down family and career and launching a combined approach.

Based on the Obama home page's use of both communal and individual

approaches, the site could appeal to both males and females. However, the communal

references' appearance low on the page indicates a lack of emphasis and priority and

indicate the designers intended to place priority on the individual achievements of the

candidate. Based on Hupfer's observations, this tactic would be more appealing to men.

John McCain Web Site

<u>Introduction</u>

As with the Obama site, I created a hierarchy of the McCain site based on the

drop-down menu across the top of the page. This hierarchy can be found in Appendix B.

The site hierarchies are similar in that the main categories resemble the Obama site.

However the language is slightly different. For example, the McCain site features an

"About" menu, while the same type of information is listed on the Obama site as

"Learn."

Next, I examined the home page, top to bottom, on all four dates recorded:

October 6, October 15, October 22 and October 31, 2008. As I examined the pages, I

answered the eight categorical questions in order, basing my results as closely as possible

on my understanding of the relevant literature from which I developed the categories.

1. Inclusion/Marginalization

Does the site maximize inclusion of and reduce the marginalization of women? Are

women included as equal participants? Is gender visible throughout the site, or does the

site ignore gender?

The McCain home page features a heavy use of imagery. Flash movies scroll

images through at intervals. The page is heavily concentrated with photos and graphics.

However, the images of women on the page are primarily those of Sarah Palin and Cindy

McCain. Some of the crowd shots have men and women in them, but the primary photos

that include women are of Sarah Palin and Cindy McCain, as seen in the campaign logo

(Figure 11) and the section at the bottom of the home page called, "Photos of the Week."

(Figure 12)

Figure 11. McCain Palin Logo

Figure 12. McCain Website – Photos of the Week

It is important to note, however, that there are no photos and graphics on the page

depicting men, either. Therefore, the pages are balanced in that there are few depictions

of either sex. Other graphics on the page are vague and do not overtly represent either
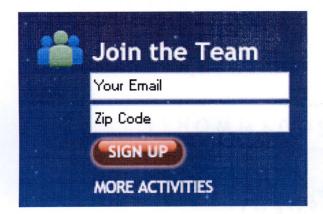
sex. (Figures 13 and 14)
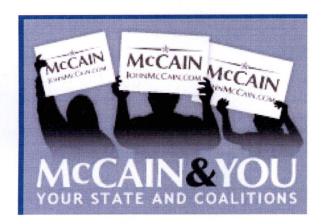
Figure 13. Join the Team

Figure 14. McCain & You

Gender on these pages is not overtly visible. Images primarily depict John McCain, Sarah Palin, and Cindy McCain. Graphics are vague and non-descript. Other graphics on the page are not gender or sex-related, but consist of generic graphics such as stars, maps, and technological tools. By ignoring gender and featuring only Palin and Cindy McCain, I do not believe this page effectively targets a complex female audience.

The McCain site also features a page for women under the "Coalitions" tab. (Figure 15)

Figure 15. Women for McCain

As expected, gender is visible on this page, both in the banner image at the top of the page, in the picture in the center of the page with Cindy McCain holding the microphone, and in the text in the center of the page. However, in contrast to the page focusing on women in the Obama site, this page does not address women's issues in a specific way. There is general reference to issues that affect women and a call for women to rally each other in support of Senator McCain. Issues in general are discussed under the "Issues" tab. On the McCain site, there is not a submenu under issues for women.

2. Women as Audience

Does the site acknowledge women as an audience? Does the site further subdivide women based on other factors? (Allen, Bioarsky)

The McCain campaign inherently addresses women as an audience by placing Sarah Palin on the ticket. However, the McCain campaign home page does not appear to overtly target women as an audience, but instead seems to address the site audience as a "universal user." Additionally, the information on the home page seems to pertain primarily to John McCain's accomplishments. For example, the "In the News" section on the home page (see figure 16) on October 6, 2009 lists the following: In Ordeal as Captive, Character was Shaped; John McCain's Weekly Radio Address; and Statement By John McCain on Today's Jobs Report."

NEWS In The News

10.05 In Ordeal as Captive, Character Was Shaped

10.04 John McCain's Weekly Radio Address

10.03 Statement By John McCain On Today's Jobs
       Report

Figure 16. In the News

Subsequent news reports mention topics such as mortgage reform, union endorsements, and Obama's tax and economic plans. While these items do not single out a feminist agenda, topics such as mortgages, taxes and the economy are important to women and men alike.

The most overt indication the McCain home page may have attempted to target women as an audience occurred on October 15, 2008. While not in the default tab, one of the tabs in the center of the home page, above the scroll line, is entitled "Financial Help."

While the title does not appear to target women specifically, the image and text visible

when clicking on the tab may do just that. (See Figure 17)

Figure 17. Financial Help

The title, which mentions "family," would appeal to women. However, "pension" would

primarily interest seniors or those thinking about retirement. The image, however, is of a

woman and a young child watching a man and another child play in a yard. The image

would imply a young family, however much of the adjacent text would appeal to seniors.

It appears that, while the site acknowledges women as audience partially (particularly

with the photograph), there appears to be an inconsistency between the photo, which targets women, and the text, which targets seniors and men as well.

The fact that the McCain site contains a page for women indicates that the designers felt women were part of the audience. However, placement further into the site does indicate a level of priority. The home page is the most prominent area of the site and is generally where site designers place elements they feel are most important. The "Women for McCain" page does not discuss particular issues that might be important to women, but instead is a call to action. This page gives women instructions on how to get involved. So, while the page does not address women through their issues, it does ask for their involvement, perhaps assuming that issues discussed on the site are important to everyone.

3. Visual Appeal to Women

Does the site appeal to women visually? How do the graphics and other visual elements target women? Is this targeting done is a negative or positive way? (Berhardt)

The McCain campaign site home page does not overtly appear to use visual elements to target women. However, by appealing to a "universal user," the site does not appear to use tactics that alienate its female audience. Images and graphics are not overtly sexist in nature; the only women clearly and consistently depicted are Sarah Palin and Cindy McCain.

The "Women for McCain" page that does overtly target women does so with an image of three women at the top in the banner. These women are of different races and appear to be different ages. However, by featuring the candidate's wife, the site may be

targeting a specific demographic: wives. Additionally, having a photo of Cindy McCain speaking to an audience with John McCain in the background may also offend some women who infer that a woman only has power when her husband is standing beside her. (See Figure 18)
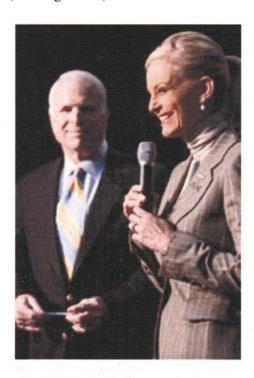
Figure 18. Cindy McCain

4. Sexism

Can sexism be avoided? Bernhardt submits that sexism can only be seen after time has passed because the standards of measuring sexism change with the social times. Do the sites contain evidence of sexism? (Bernhardt)

The McCain home pages do not contain images that contain sexual innuendo or that appear to depict women in a derogatory fashion. However, an interesting difference

between the hierarchies of the Obama and McCain sites is that under "Learn," the Obama

site lists:

- Meet Barack Obama
- Meet Michelle Obama
- Meet Joe Biden
- Meet Jill Biden

While the McCain site, in the "About" section lists:

- About John McCain
- About Cindy McCain
- About Sarah Palin

Absent from this section on the McCain site is a reference to Sarah Palin's spouse, Todd

Palin. Only the designers of the site know for sure why Todd Palin's name is absent from

the site tabs. However, there are several possibilities. Mr. Palin may have decided he did

not want to be included, although this decision seems unlikely given his and his family's

participation in the campaign. Instead, perhaps the campaign believed that adding his

name under his wife's name would violate social norms and alienate some voters. Social

tradition generally puts the man's name first, with the wife's name under his. However,

it is important to note that very rarely in this country's history has a woman been selected

as a major party vice-presidential candidate and perhaps, because this water is

unchartered, simply removing Todd Palin's name was an effective and discrete method of

addressing (or not addressing) what the designers considered a dilemma. From a feminist

perspective, leaving Todd Palin out of the hierarchy could be considered sexist.

Additionally, as mentioned in the previous section, the fact that Cindy McCain is

featured so prominently on the women's section of the site and the fact that the section

does not address women's issues, but merely offers tools for engagement indicate that the

campaign may feel it is unimportant to engage women on the issues.

5. Inclusive Language

Does the site use inclusive language (i.e. feminine pronouns)? (Corbett)

The McCain website home pages, like the Obama pages, frequently use first and second person to address the audience. In examining the home pages from the four recorded dates, I found little overt reference to gender or sex. The pages use the word "you" or a derivation frequently. However, on October 6, 2009, a feminine pronoun is used to describe Sarah Palin, but a male pronoun is not used in a similar sentence in reference to John McCain, on the same page. The lack of a male pronoun makes the comment seem grammatically awkward. (See Figure 19)

Figure 19. McCain Home Page – October 6, 2009

Because the use of gender-specific language occurs so infrequently, I can only surmise the absence of such language is by design to create a more "gender neutral" site.

It would be unfair to say the site does not use inclusive language when neither sex is singled out.

6. Navigation

Are the navigational tools on the site designed to appeal to both sexes? Since women use landmarks and prefer browsing, while men use search engines and, depending on the circumstances, women may be inclined to use both, does the site target women based on its navigation design? (Bowie)

The McCain campaign website is heavily composed of graphics. Each graphic is a "clickable" area for easy navigation. The page is divided into quadrants with clear boundaries. Flash movies scroll images by subject across the screen. These navigational cues, according to Bowie, are appealing to women.

Also on the page are several drop-down menus and input boxes. (See Figure 20) Since men generally prefer direct access to information on the page, these drop down menus and input boxes probably appeal well to men.

Figure 20. McCain Home Page

Also, unlike the Obama site, the McCain site offers a search box. However, instead of

the box being located in the traditional top right corner of the page, it is located in the

bottom right corner of the page. (See Figure 21)

Figure 21. McCain Home Page – Photos of the Week

According to Bowie, search boxes appeal to masculine users. Based on the combination of navigational elements, this site should appeal to both men and women, and does not appear to target women specifically in navigational structure.

7. Community Emphasis

Does the site present information about the candidates in a way that suggests individual achievement or do they emphasize the candidate as a member of a community? Hupfer and Bowie suggest that males are drawn toward individual achievement, while females are generally more concerned with community. (Hupfer and Bowie)

The McCain campaign website strongly emphasizes individual achievement. Perhaps this emphasis is largely due to McCain's history as a prisoner of war. The emphasis on individual achievement appears in multiple locations on the page. For example, in the menu options, on the main home page, and on the women's page, the word "McCain" or a reference to the candidate appears overwhelmingly. This emphasis

is perhaps an ideological difference, given the criticism of Obama as a community

organizer. (See Figure 22)

Figure 22. McCain Home Page – In the News

Important to note here is that, not only is McCain mentioned, the implication of each

statement is on his opinion, his achievement, or his involvement in the topic. And, while

Sarah Palin is mentioned on this page, it is clear the focus is on the achievements of

McCain and Palin as individuals, not as a team.

An emphasis on individual achievement is clear in the site hierarchy, as well. In the "About" section, the following items appear:

- About John McCain
- About Cindy McCain
- About Sarah Palin
- Why John McCain
- Courageous Service
- Cindy's Travels
- McCain Timeline
- Strategy Briefing
- Photo Gallery

Of these items, four are in reference to John McCain as an individual (About John McCain, Why John McCain, Courageous Service, McCain Timeline.) Interestingly, Cindy McCain is mentioned twice as often as the vice-presidential nominee, Sarah Palin.

The page targeting women specifically, however, carries a more communal tone. (See Figures 23 and 24) For example, Figure 23 is the "women's" page from October 6, 2008. On this page, the campaign refers to the "millions of women voters who will decide this election." Appearing in the next sentence are words such as, "join our team", "recruit your friends and family," and "spread the word." In the photo on this page, John McCain appears with his wife, Cindy, instead of either appearing alone.

On the "women's" page from October 22, 2008 (Figure 24), Sarah Palin asks that the viewer "join our cause." Later in the page, women are described as a "key voting bloc" and that the visitors should "join millions of women, like you." All of these phrases and terms appear to inspire a sense of community among women, although they do not appear to break women down into subgroups.
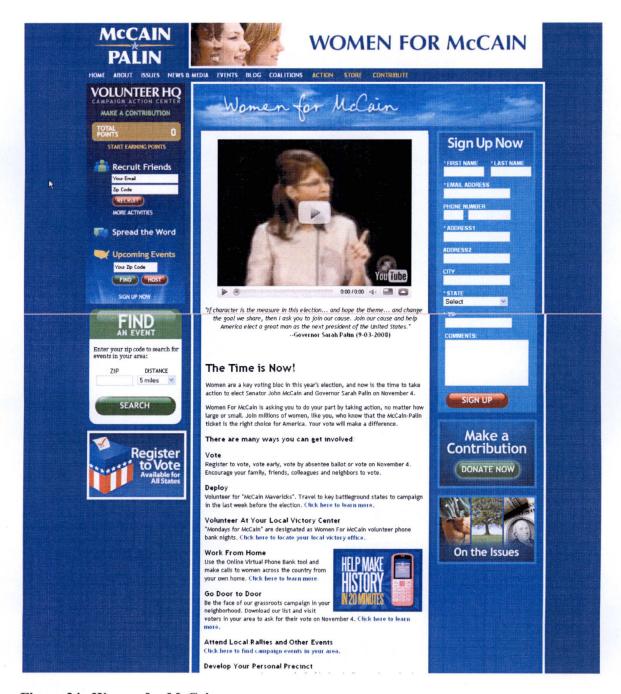
Figure 23. Women for McCain

Figure 24. Women for McCain

8. Dual Emphasis

Do the sites use a combined approach of both communal and agentic to target females?

Hupfer suggests this strategy targets women of different demographics, breaking down

family and career and launching a combined approach.

Technically, the site does use a dual approach, however, in the pages analyzed; the approach appears to be agentic on the home page and communal on the page specifically targeting women. However, on the pages targeting women, reference is made to individual achievement in the sense that every single vote counts. "Your vote can make a difference" appears on the Women for McCain page from October 22, 2008. Predominantly, though, the tone of the page is communal.

The Democratic Party Website

<u>Introduction</u>

As with the Obama and McCain sites, I created a hierarchy of the Democratic Party website using the drop-down menu across the top of the page. This hierarchy can be found in Appendix C. The party site hierarchy differs from the two candidate sites; however, some similarities exist. To be consistent, I chose to analyze the home page as well as the page entitled "Women" under the "People" tab.

To begin the site analysis, I examined the home page and the women's page, top to bottom, on all four dates recorded: October 6, October 15, October 22 and October 31, 2008. As I examined the pages, I answered the eight categorical questions in order, basing my results as closely as possible on my understanding of the relevant literature from which I developed the categories.

1. Inclusion/Marginalization

Does the site maximize inclusion of and reduce the marginalization of women? Are women included as equal participants? Is gender visible throughout the site, or does the site ignore gender?

The Democratic Party website is comprised of text and graphics. The page is subdivided with clear boundaries between the sections. Of the numerous graphics appearing on these pages, on only one occasion did I find an image of a woman. This image occurred on October 31, 2008. (See Figure 25)

Figure 25. Democratic Party Home Page

This image of a woman in the healthcare profession appears below the scroll line toward the center of the page. All the other images on this page and the other pages recorded are of men or generic graphics and images. Generally speaking, the text on these pages is not gender-specific; instead, the text usually occurs in the form of news stories describing particular events. The only specific mention on these pages of a woman is in one of the headlines on October 31, 2008. The headline reads, "Wife of Former GOP Governor Endorses Obama." This headline appears low on the page on the left, indicating a relatively low level of importance.

By contrast, women are well-represented visually on the "Women" page of the Democratic Party site. (See Figure 26)

Figure 26. Democratic Party Women's Page

On this page, images of women appear across the top and the top left, both positions of prominence and indicating importance. Headlines on the page refer frequently to women of power and issues women might find important. Gender is visible on this page, in contrast to the home page, on which gender is not consistently visible.

2. Women as Audience

Does the site acknowledge women as an audience? Does the site further subdivide women based on other factors? (Allen, Bioarsky)

The Democratic Party home pages seem to address a universal user, much like the Obama and McCain home pages. Language on the pages is generic and issue-oriented,

without overt references to women or specific women's issues. However, the hierarchy of the site does provide a tab for a women's page, and in that respect does acknowledge women as an audience.

The text on the women's page appears in the form of hyperlinked headlines. The headline's text does overtly target women. (See Figure 26 - above) Interestingly, however, the recorded pages from all four dates are identical. While the home page of the site changed from one recording to the next, the pages dedicated to women did not change at all from October 6 through October 31, 2008. Because these pages did not change, I believe the site designers acknowledged women as an audience but set the priority for women's issues low, based on the site hierarchy and lack of attention to the page.

3. Visual Appeal to Women

Does the site appeal to women visually? How do the graphics and other visual elements target women? Is this targeting done is a negative or positive way? (Berhardt)

On the Democratic Party home pages, an interesting visual transition takes place. In web design, as previously mentioned, the top left corner of the page is a position of importance. The banner image appearing in this location changed on each of the recorded dates. The images in Figure 27 appear chronologically.
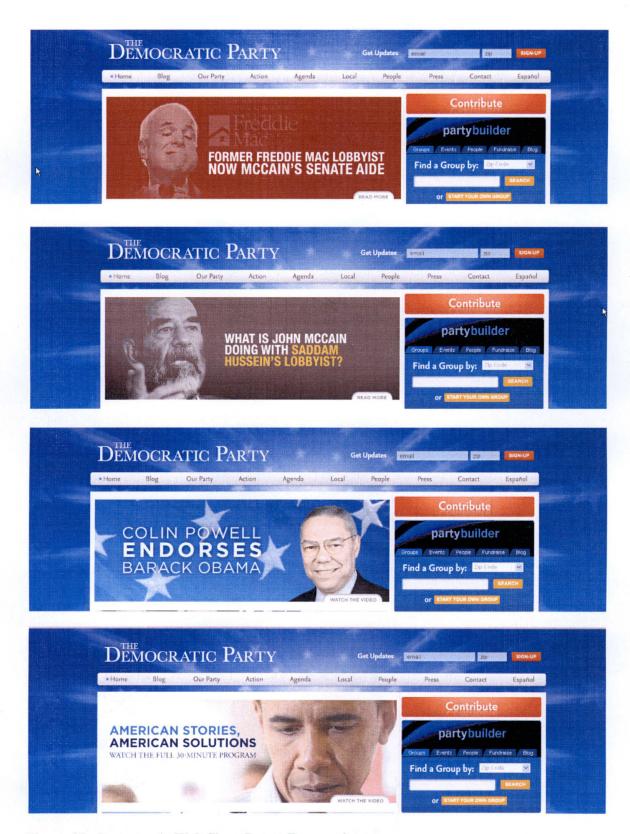
Figure 27. Democratic Web Site – Image Progression

What struck me about these images was the varying degree of negativity, lessening as Election Day approached. If these images were designed to target women, then the earlier images do so in a negative way, encouraging fear of McCain and associating him negatively with unsavory people. Then, as the election approached, the tactic changed to more positive images of Colin Powell and Barack Obama, leaving some negative images of McCain on the page, but in less-prominent positions.

4. Sexism

Can sexism be avoided? Bernhardt submits that sexism can only be seen after time has passed because the standards of measuring sexism change with the social times. Do the sites contain evidence of sexism? (Bernhardt)

As indicated in Figure 27, the Democratic Party home pages used imagery in a de-escalating fashion. During the 2004 election, many political scientists credit Bush's win to fear of changing presidents in the middle of a war. Some pundits dubbed the voters who pushed the election strongly in Bush's favor as the "Soccer Moms." Perhaps these images were targeting those so-called "Soccer Moms" and were designed to instill fear in the opposing candidate and comfort and solace in the Democratic candidate. If this tactic is the case, then an argument can be made as to the sexist nature of such a tactic. However, as Bernhardt points out, sexism can be subtle, as well as overt, and only time and further analysis may make this determination.

5. Inclusive Language

Does the site use inclusive language (i.e., feminine pronouns)? (Corbett)

As with the other sites analyzed so far, the Democratic Party site appears in many ways to address a universal user, avoiding gendered language and opting for a first-person approach. For example, in the drop down menu list, one of the links is "Our Party." The use of "our" does not depict a specific gender, but groups everyone together. Any pronouns used elsewhere on the pages appear appropriate to the subject matter and refer to a specific individual. Other instances include phrases such as "Everything you need to know about McCain" and "Taking our country back."

6. Navigation

Are the navigational tools on the site designed to appeal to both sexes? Since women use landmarks and prefer browsing, while men use search engines and, depending on the circumstances, women may be inclined to use both, does the site target women based on its navigation design? (Bowie)

The Democratic Party home page features multiple navigational options. The page is divided into sections with clear, square margins. There are tabs for browsing in the middle of the page slightly above the scroll line and graphics hyperlinked to other sections of the site. The pages are structurally consistent over time, with landmarks remaining in familiar locations.

In addition to navigational functionality that promotes browsing, several direct navigation methods exist on these pages. For example, a search box for the site appears on the right side of the page. Although this box is not located in the top right, it is easy to find above the scroll line and in a location generally consistent with mainstream design.

There are other input boxes on the page as well, including in the "partybuilder" section, allowing for zip code input as well as search capability by topic.

Because the site uses both landmark and direct navigational techniques, the design is consistent with both feminine and masculine navigational techniques, and because both are present, this site should appeal well to feminine users.

7. Community Emphasis

Does the site present information about the candidates in a way that suggests individual achievement or do they emphasize the candidate as a member of a community? Hupfer and Bowie suggest that males are drawn toward individual achievement, while females are generally more concerned with community. (Hupfer and Bowie)

The Democratic Party home page consistently focuses on individuals, either their achievements or their failures. For example, the home page from October 6, 2008 (Figure 28) depicts McCain in the top left image and associates him negatively with a Freddie Mac lobbyist. Directly below this image is a positive depiction of Howard Dean, the DNC chairman, and his interview on MSNBC about Biden's success at a recent debate. Next to that depiction is a story called "Can't Explain" in which Biden blames McCain for the deregulation of the financial industry. Each depiction represents an individual's actions, although it would seem highly unlikely John McCain single-handedly deregulated the financial industry.

Figure 28. Democratic Party Home Page

While there are strong signals toward individualism placed prominently on the page, several references to community also appear, albeit in less-prominent positions. For example, the "partybuilder" section includes tabs such as "groups" and "people." Below that section is a graphic called "50 State Strategy," which implies cohesion in the party's approach to the election. Under this section is a statement, "Taking our country back," which implies community as well. However, these communal references are smaller in size than the individual references and placed less-prominently on the page, indicating their lower priority in the design.

Figure 29. Democratic Party Home Page

8. Dual Emphasis

Do the sites use a combined approach of both communal and agentic to target females?

Hupfer suggests this strategy targets women of different demographics, breaking down

family and career and launching a combined approach.

A dual emphasis of communal and agentic approach would be appropriate on the

Democratic Party home pages if a balance existed between the two approaches.

However, because of the prominent placement and relative size of the individualistic

components, I would not consider this page to have a dual emphasis, meaning it should

appeal more to male users than female users.

The Republican Party Website

As with the previous three sites, I created a hierarchy of the Republican Party website using the drop-down menu across the top of the page. This can heirarchy be found in Appendix D. The party site hierarchy differs from the two candidate sites; however, some similarities exist. To be consistent, I chose to analyze the home page as well as the page entitled "Women" under the "Coalitions" tab.

To begin the site analysis, I examined the home page and the women's page, top to bottom, on all four dates recorded: October 6, October 15, October 22 and October 31, 2008. As I examined the pages, I answered the eight categorical questions in order, basing my results as closely as possible on my understanding of the relevant literature from which I developed the categories.

1. Inclusion/Marginalization

Does the site maximize inclusion of and reduce the marginalization of women? Are women included as equal participants? Is gender visible throughout the site, or does the site ignore gender?

The Republican Party website home page appears to address a universal user, much like the Democratic Party home page. Many of the terms used are in the first person. For example "Welcome to My GOP." Also, as with the other sites, the page is full of action verbs or commands such as, "Join, Contribute, Register, Create and Get." These terms imply the site visitor is "you," rather than he or she. Because the page lacks overt gender or sex references, the home page appears to ignore gender and opt for a universal, non-gendered user.

The GOP page specifically targeting women is called the "RNC Women's Group" and features a group called the "Pink Elephants." Gender is visible on this page, as one would expect. Featured prominently on this page is a thumbnail of a video hosted by Jo Ann Davidson, Co-Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

2. Women as Audience

Does the site acknowledge women as an audience? Does the site further subdivide women based on other factors? (Allen, Bioarsky)

The Republican Party website home page appears to have a primary agenda of attacking the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama. There are far more references on the home page to Obama than to McCain or Palin. (See Figure 30)
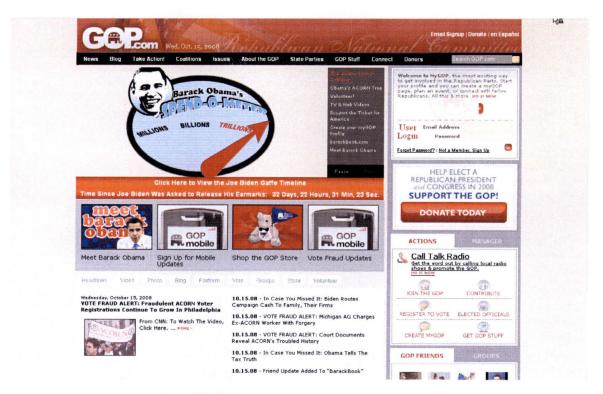

Figure 30. Republican Party Home Page

On the home page from October 15, 2008, there is a minimum of seven references to Obama in a compressed area. There is also a reference to Biden. However, I found no reference on this page to McCain. I also found no specific reference to women as the audience on this page. While the topics mentioned, such as voter fraud, campaign finance issues, and taxes are important, they are not issues necessarily directed at women. (An example of such a topic would be breast cancer awareness. This topic is associated primarily with women, although a small number of men do contract breast cancer as well.)

The page directed toward women specifically does consider women as an audience. However, the page is not particularly detailed and does not target specific campaign issues. There is a call to recruit other women to vote and a reference to "Jo Ann Davidson's Weekly Talking Points" but not a comprehensive approach to the relevant campaign issues, or those issues women might find important. (See Figure 31) To further investigate this section of the site, I clicked on Davidson's talking points. (See Figure 32) The list of topics in this section does include some issues that apply specifically to women, such as schools and communities. These are relevant because a majority of the nation's caregivers are female. But the majority of the topics are multifaceted, such as Pension and Family Security Plan, the Debates, Economic Recovery, Veteran's Issues, etc. These topics apply to many different types of Americans, but not women specifically, as the title "Pink Elephants" implies.

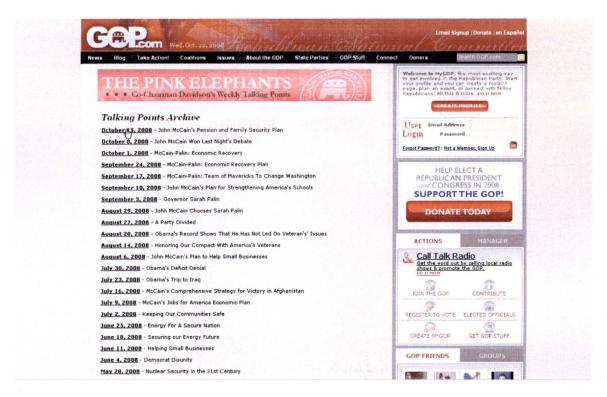Figure 31. Republican Party Women's Page

Figure 32. Pink Elephants

I concluded that these pages primarily address a universal user and lack substantial

evidence that women are a highly targeted audience.

3. Visual Appeal to Women

Does the site appeal to women visually? How do the graphics and other visual elements

target women? Is this targeting done is a negative or positive way? (Berhardt)

The Republican Party home page is rife with images and graphics. Because of the

Flash movie setup, there are layers to the page, and each layer contains a different image

or graphic. In many cases, because the site targets Obama heavily, his image has been

altered or used in an unflattering way. These images appear on the home pages from

October 6, October 15, and October 22, 2008. A selection of these images appears in
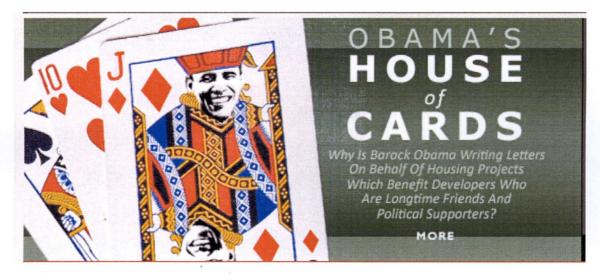
Figure 33.

Figure 33. Republican Site – Obama Images

It is not until October 31, 2008 that an image of John McCain appears prominently on the site home page. (See Figure 34) This image is positive, in sharp contrast to the negative images of Obama in the preceding weeks.
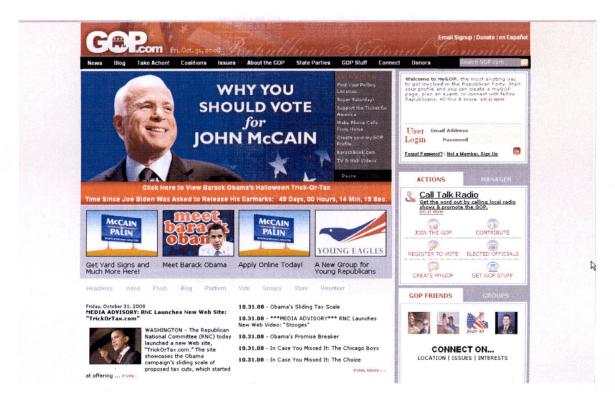
Figure 34. Republican Home Page

It is unlikely that negative imagery appeals to women in general. However, women who already support the GOP might find the images in line with their beliefs. The later image of McCain is powerful and positive and likely would appeal to many female voters, particularly to women who see themselves and their families reflected in his image.

4. Sexism

Can sexism be avoided? Bernhardt submits that sexism can only be seen after time has passed because the standards of measuring sexism change with the social times. Do the sites contain evidence of sexism? (Bernhardt)

In evaluating the Republican Party home pages, I found a noticeable lack of imagery or text referencing women or women's issues. In fact, every image on the

default tabs on the home pages for the four dates recorded pictured only men, and primarily Barack Obama. It is possible that ignoring women completely is inherently sexist. It is also possible that the purpose of this site, as I mentioned earlier, was strictly a vehicle with which to attack the opposing candidate. If the latter case is true, women were neither targeted nor considered. Is this sexism? Perhaps only time will tell.

On the page that specifically targets women; minimal images of women were used. The fact that even the page targeting women did not depict women, other than the vice-chairman of the committee, may very well be sexist. The fact that her title is "vice-chairman" certain seems to be non inclusive.

The color pink is used extensively on this page. And while many groups use the color as a symbol of awareness (i.e., breast cancer awareness), some women may find it minimizes the important political issues at hand, particularly since those issues are not addressed on the page. The page is simply pink.

5. Inclusive Language

Does the site use inclusive language (i.e,. feminine pronouns)? (Corbett)

Since this site, along with the Democratic site, seems to target a universal user, inclusive language was not evident, but may not be necessary. I found no overt references to gender or sex at all, aside from the lack of female images. Therefore, I did not find inclusive language on the home pages.

As I mentioned in the previous section, however, the fact that the Vice-Chairperson of the Republican National Committee carries the title "vice-chairman" appears to be non-inclusive and follows a patriarchal tradition.

6. Navigation

Are the navigational tools on the site designed to appeal to both sexes? Since women use landmarks and prefer browsing, while men use search engines and, depending on the circumstances, women may be inclined to use both, does the site target women based on its navigation design? (Bowie)

The Republican National Committee (GOP) home page hosts more content than any of the other sites previously evaluated. However, the page is shorter, so the content is compressed into a smaller area. There is an additional layer at the top left, however, where rotating tabs provide a different subject each time you click on the tab to the left. Below that section is another section of tabs, where the user may click and change the message (See Figure 35) These navigational tools provide clear landmarks that may appeal to women visitors. I did not find a search box anywhere on the site or any significant direct navigational tools, as would generally appeal to men using the site.
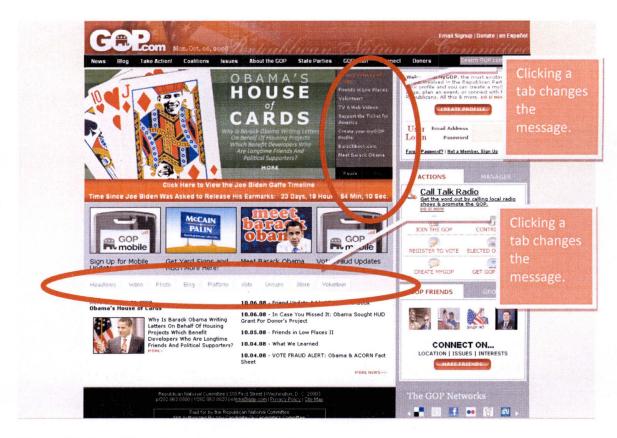
Figure 35. Republican Party Home Page - Structure

7. Community Emphasis

Does the site present information about the candidates in a way that suggests individual achievement or do they emphasize the candidate as a member of a community? Hupfer and Bowie suggest that males are drawn toward individual achievement, while females are generally more concerned with community. (Hupfer and Bowie)

As stated earlier, this site appears to serve as a vehicle to attack the opposing candidate, Barack Obama. Frequent references to Obama and his proposed policies focus the site visitor on his individual "achievements." Obviously, these achievements are negatively reflected. The emphasis is on Obama as an individual, rather than on his party. In the menu at the top of the page, however, there is a link called "Coalitions."

This term does imply teamwork and cooperation. And further down the page, terms such as "Support the Ticket" and "What We Learned" are more oriented toward group or community than individual. However, the size and location of these items is diminished when compared to the references to Obama.

8. Dual Emphasis

Do the sites use a combined approach of both communal and agentic to target females? Hupfer suggests that this strategy targets women of different demographics, breaking down family and career and launching a combined approach.

While this site does contain references to both communal and agentic approaches, the agentic approach dominates the home pages of the Republican Party website. Based on the literature, this approach would more likely appeal to male visitors than to female visitors.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of four campaign websites recorded prior to the 2008 presidential election. These sites were for the candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, and for the two major parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The sites were recorded on October 6, October 15, October 22, and October 31, 2008. I used screenshots of the home pages for the sites as well as the page on each site that overtly targeted women.

The following chapter will provide a summary of the results, draw conclusions about the research, and make recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes and synthesizes the results of the discourse analysis

conducted in Chapter IV. The chapter is organized into sections. Each section

corresponds to one of the eight research categories, which were presented in question

form. In each section, I will provide a summary of the findings on the four sites and

make observations about those findings. Following these categorical sections, I will

address the limitations of this research and discuss the implications for future study.

The Obama website includes women through use of images and text. The images

appear consistently on both the home page for all four dates and on the "women's" page.

The pages frequently reference women, some high in stature like Hillary Clinton, and

some personal stories of American women. Images and references to women appear on

the top and bottom of the pages, left and right sides. Images of women vary by age and

race; however, the most-prominently placed images are of affluent, white women and few

images appear of women of color. Perhaps choosing women of this demographic

indicates that the designers were specifically targeting Hillary Clinton voters and

believed women of color would vote for Obama regardless.

As does the Obama site, the McCain website includes women through images and text, but to a far lesser degree than the Obama site. The images of women on the McCain site are primarily of Sarah Palin and Cindy McCain. Most graphics and images on the McCain site are generic and lack gender definition.

In contrast, the Democratic Party website home page features almost no images of women and appears to be targeting a gender-free universal user. Textual references about women on the home pages for all four dates are scant. By contrast, the "women's" page on the Democratic Party website prominently features images of women of varying demographics. The headlined stories featured on the page are about and for women. So, while the main page does not include women, the interior page specifically targeting women does.

Even more than the Democratic site, the Republican Party website home page appears to ignore gender altogether. And while the "women's" page, called the Pink Elephants, does prominently feature a video with a thumbnail of Jo Ann Davidson, her title is Co-Chairman, and the page does not prominently feature women other than Cindy McCain and Sarah Palin. For the site visitor to find in-depth information pertaining to women, she must click the "Talking Points" link, one step deeper into the site.

It is clear from the analysis that the Obama and McCain sites attempt to make gender visible by creating pages specifically for women. However, the Obama home page is only inclusive toward a particular demographic (middle to upper class white women), apparently targeting Hillary Clinton voters and ignoring women of color. The McCain site is more generic, featuring only women related to the campaign. The Obama site moves more toward diversity on its "women's" page, targeting women of all

demographics by issue; the McCain site does not. Neither major party site makes gender visible, targeting a universal user, instead.

By targeting female Hillary Clinton voters and not women of color, the Obama campaign assumed (correctly) that women of color would ultimately vote for Obama and that the site should target women who would most likely have voted for Hillary Clinton. This was a gamble that paid off. Had the McCain designers targeted this demographic more aggressively, perhaps the designers could have appealed to the undecided women that had previously supported Clinton. The McCain site did not expand the demographic enough to include the wider range of female Clinton supporters in the manner the Obama site did and possibly lost all but core supporters. The two major campaign sites could have teamed with their candidates to create a comprehensive plan targeting Clinton's female supporters, but neither did so. While they achieved their purpose of attacking the rival candidate, this does not appear to have been a particularly effective tactic to woo Clinton supporters.

While the Obama home page acknowledges women as an audience, the women pictured most prominently appear to be affluent white women. However, when the user visits the "women's" page, she finds an array of information, by issue, indicating an acknowledgement of women as a complex audience. The graphics at the top of the page picture women of different ethnic origin and age, and the numerous topics provide information about issues important to women, young and old, of varying races and class.

The McCain home page appears to target a universal user and, while McCain's choice of Palin as his running mate acknowledges women as an important audience, the website does not overtly do so. Information on the McCain home page relates almost

exclusively to McCain's accomplishments, and the topics of headlines on the page do not appear to single women out as an audience. The "women's" page on the McCain site does acknowledge the designers believed women as audience; however, the content on the page is about recruitment, not women's issues.

The Democratic Party website home page also appears to target a universal user, not singling women out as an audience. The site's "women's" page does target women and acknowledge women as an audience. The headlines for the hyperlinked stories on this page target women; however, the headlines do not change during the period of time that the sites were recorded, indicating a low priority for women as an audience.

The Republican Party website home page seems exclusively dedicated to attacking Barack Obama and does not overtly acknowledge women as an audience. The fact that there is a "women's" page indicates the designers understood women might visit the site; however, the page lacks detail and fails to address women's issues in a substantial way. In many ways, the topics on the "women's" page equally target all Americans, including men.

The analysis indicates that both the Obama and McCain sites acknowledge women as an audience, but do so with varying degrees of importance. The Obama site targets Hillary Clinton voters (presumably comprised of a majority of women), and further targets women of all demographics with a comprehensive "women's" page addressing issues important to women. The McCain home page appears to devalue its female audience by targeting a universal user, and further marginalizes women by hosting a weak "women's" page. The choice of a female running mate indicates that, at some level, someone believed that appealing to women was important, but the concept

did not carry into the site design. However, perhaps a male running mate coupled with a more comprehensive design strategy appropriately targeting the undecided female voters would have been a better strategy. Obama capitalized on audience analysis effectively and chose to target a specific, yet diverse group of women without alienating the women outside of the demographic.

The two major party websites strongly target a universal user, failing to address women specifically as an audience. Their purpose appears to be merely to attack the opposition, and that purpose does not involve targeting women specifically in the process. This strategy seems ineffective and it appears that ignoring women as audience wasted a potentially valuable resource in the major party site.

The Obama home page provides consistent images of women, albeit those images are not prevalent. However, because the majority of the images appear to represent affluent white women, the site may appeal primarily to women who see themselves in those images. On the "women's" page, few images appear. The page seems concerned with articulating issues the designers believed women would find important. Visually, this site uses text more than graphics to appeal to women in a positive way.

Unlike the Obama page, the McCain home page does not appear to target women visually, but also fails to alienate them. This page, geared toward a universal user, is visually neutral, as far as images of and for women is concerned. The "women's" page on this site does appeal visually to women. However, featuring the candidate's wife, with her husband behind her, may appeal only to women who see themselves in this image. Additionally, McCain appearing on the page with his wife may alienate some independent-minded women.

The Democratic Party home page uses images that vary in negativity, lessening as the election approaches. These early images may appeal less to women than later, more-positive images.

The Republican Party home page featured negative images of Barack Obama consistently, and this negativity is unlikely to appeal to most women. However, a later image of a smiling McCain on the page might appeal to a particular subset of women.

The analysis indicates that the Obama home page appeals to a particular female demographic. Additionally, neither the Obama nor McCain home pages specifically alienate women. But, the Obama site goes a step farther by creating an interior page for women with broader appeal, where the McCain designers do not. The Obama strategy of appealing visually to women is effective. The McCain site could have benefited from this same tactic, but instead seemed to arbitrarily choose images of the women associated with the party and not women at large. The two major party sites use aggressive and negative images that likely do not appeal to women. However, the Democratic site progressively softens the images as the election approaches. Both party sites could have partnered with their candidates and designed their sites to be more visually appealing to the women who were poised to decide the election.

The Obama website hierarchy places Michelle Obama and Jill Biden's names directly after their husbands, indicating their status as important partners. Nowhere on the Obama home page did I find evidence of inappropriate sexist images or language. The content on the "women's" page seemed appropriate to issues currently important to women and not condescending in nature.

The McCain website hierarchy differs from the Obama hierarchy in that Todd Palin's name does not appear under his wife's name, or anywhere else in the hierarchy. The fact that he participated so openly during the campaign process, as did Jill Biden, makes his absence on the site all the more noticeable. It seems quite likely that designers feared placing his name under his wife's name might be such a violation of social norms as to alienate their candidate's base constituents. In this case, I believe it is highly likely that Todd Palin's absence from the site hierarchy is sexist in nature.

The Democratic Party's use of de-escalating negative images may have been intended to instill fear in women early in the process and then comfort as Election Day approached. An argument could be made that the maneuver was sexist manipulation, if the intended target audience was indeed women.

Because the Republican Party website seems to ignore women completely, it is possible that sexism exists in the design. Another indication that sexism exists on the Republican Party site is the use of the title "Co-chairman" for the female co-leader of the party.

The analysis indicates that the Obama pages lacked evidence of sexism; however, the McCain hierarchy leaves Todd Palin's name out completely. This could be construed as sexist, since the Obama site lists both partners after their spouse's name. The McCain site could have listed Todd Palin's name under his wife's name, thus sending a strong message to women that the candidate sees a powerful woman as an asset. By omitting Todd Palin's name, the campaign sent a message to women that a power woman is powerful in absence of a man. The negative imagery on the Democratic home page could be sexist in that it appears to be designed to instill fear, most likely in women voters.

One could interpret the republican site as sexist by its complete lack of attention to women. Both party sites missed an opportunity to partner with their candidates and avoid sexism.

The Obama home pages use inclusive language such as, "us, we and you." By using such language, the designers avoid differentiating between male and female, unless addressing a specific person. The audience of the site is addressed as "you" rather than male or female. The "women's" page appropriately uses language addressing females. The words "women" and "female" appear frequently on the page.

The McCain home pages also use first and second person to address the audience, rather than assuming sex or gender. However, there is some inconsistency. In a particular instance on the same page, the author refers to Palin as "she" but avoids "he" when indicating McCain. However, since overall neither sex is singled out consistently, the language is generally gender-neutral.

Both the Democratic Party and Republican Party sites appear to target a universal user and, in most cases, avoid textual references to gender or sex.

The analysis reveals that both the Obama and McCain sites use inclusive language, but to varying degrees. The Obama pages frequently use inclusive language, while the McCain site sporadically uses inclusive language. Both use first and second person to address the audience, but the McCain site is more individual oriented and refers often to McCain. Neither of the major party sites refer to gender or sex at all. While offering a gender neutral space may be effective in some ways, it is still important that the pages target the desired audience. The McCain site could have been used more inclusive language, focusing less intensely on the candidate and more on the audience.

For example, while McCain's accomplishments were important and a strong selling point, the site did little to connect him to his audience. Perhaps by including others in his story he might have been able to tie himself to his audience more effectively.

The analysis indicates that, since the Obama site utilizes multiple landmarks and graphics to orient its site user and lacks direct input boxes, particularly a search box, the Obama site design should appeal more to female users. The McCain site uses both navigation landmarks and direct input boxes, including a search box. Based on the dual navigational techniques this site should appeal to both sexes. The Democratic Party website also utilizes dual navigational techniques, with a variety of landmarks and a prominent search box. This site should appeal to both sexes. However, the Republican Party site features navigational tools that provide landmark navigation and no search box. This site should appeal to women more than men. All the sites did an adequate job navigationally to target women, and while audience is important, the McCain site did a better job of appealing to both. The Obama designers probably should provide a search box to bring the site in line with conventional design techniques.

The Obama site uses a combination of individual achievement and community involvement, with slightly more emphasis on the individual candidate. This approach should appeal to both female and male site visitors. The pages offer frequent references to community activities and to Obama and Biden together.

The McCain site strongly emphasizes the individual achievements of the candidate. The pages frequently reference his status as a war hero, and his name is used frequently in reference to his achievements and opinions. Seldom do the pages reference community or use inclusive language. This emphasis on individual achievement is

consistent with the campaign stance against Obama's claim of experience as a community organizer. An emphasis on individual achievement should appeal more to male site visitors than female visitors.

The Democratic Party home page consistently focuses on the individual, whether promoting achievement by a party member, or casting individual blame on an opponent. Some reference to community exists on the pages; however, their placement in less-prominent positions indicates that individual achievement (positive or negative) takes precedence.

The overwhelming emphasis on the Republican Party home pages is on Obama as an individual and his failures. However, one of the tabs across the top of the page is "coalitions," indicating some effort was made in choosing language consistent with community.

The analysis indicates that the Obama site heavily emphases community, while still featuring the candidate as the dominate person. In contrast, the McCain site heavily emphasizes the candidate and rarely promotes community. Both party sites are individualistic, but toward the opposing candidates failures, rather than their candidate's accomplishments. Therefore, it is the Obama site that should appeal to women, over the other sites. The McCain designers missed an opportunity to balance individualism with community be focusing exclusively on the candidate and negating the teamwork required in a comprehensive campaign.

The analysis indicates that the Obama home page incorporates dual emphasis between communal and agentic; however, due to prominent placement, the emphasis appears to be on the individual achievements of the candidate. Had the designers created

a balance between the two, closing the gap, they could have appealed more to women than they did. As it stands, this approach should appeal more to men than women. The McCain site uses both approaches; an agentic approach on the home page and a communal approach on the "women's" page. However, overall the dual approach should appeal to women. A dual approach on the Democratic Party home page is essentially negated by the imbalance between the two. Because the predominant approach is toward the individual, this page should appeal more to men. The Republican Party home page is dominated by an agentic approach, which should appeal to male users. Both party sites missed an opportunity to balance their approach and appeal to women voters.

Based on my analysis, the Obama campaign website provided the most evidence of an awareness of women as audience. The evidence supports the idea that designers made a comprehensive effort to appeal to women, while acknowledging the complexity of this important audience. However, even more specifically, the lack of effort to attract women of color would indicate they were targeting Hillary Clinton female voters specifically. This was a risky strategy, but ultimately paid off.

The McCain campaign may have believed that selecting a female running mate would appeal to women voters; however, the site design does not indicate that rhetorical strategies were used consistently to address a complex female audience.

Both the Democratic and Republican Party websites used their rhetorical strategies as a vehicle to attack their opposing candidates. Neither site consistently used strategies to appeal specifically to female voters.

Future campaign site designers should pay close attention to the design strategies employed by the Obama design team. The Obama designers effectively analyzed their

audience and used rhetorical techniques that would appeal to the appropriate female demographic. The McCain site could have capitalized on this strategy as well, but did not take the analysis far enough. It appears the McCain design team acknowledged women as an audience, but did not recognize the complexity of this audience to the degree the Obama designers did. The two major party sites effectively missed an opportunity to augment their candidate's by employing rhetorical strategies to appeal to undecided female voters. In the future, these designers might consider expanding the role of the site from simply an attack vehicle to a valuable resource that could work in conjunction with their party's candidate.

Limitations and Further Research

Because of the complexities of these websites and the numerous pages that were not analyzed, limitations to this analysis are unavoidable. Further research on areas of the site that do not specifically target women could produce interesting results as well. Knowing if designers targeted women on pages other than those labeled "women" could prove to be valuable information when future designers begin the process of constructing new political campaign websites for future political contests.

<center>**APPENDIX A**</center>

<u>**Obama Web Site Hierarchy 10-06-08**</u>

Home

Learn
> Meet Barack Obama
> Meet Michelle Obama
> Meet Joe Biden
> Meet Jill Biden
> Obama Speeches
> In the News
> Know the Facts

Issues
> Civil Rights
> Defense
> Disabilities
> Economy
> Education
> Energy & Environment
> Ethics
> Faith
> Family
> Fiscal
> Foreign Policy
> Healthcare
> Homeland Security
> Immigration
> Iraq
> Poverty
> Rural
> Service
> Seniors & Social Security
> Taxes
> Technology
> Urban Policy
> Veterans
> Women

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Additional Issues

Media
> Barack TV
> Photos
> Downloads
> Mobile
> Music

Action
> My.BarackObama.com
> Sign up for email
> Volunteer
> Action Center
> Donate
> Register to vote
> Contact us

People
> Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders
> African Americans
> Americans Abroad
> Americans with Disabilities
> Arab Americans
> European & Mediterranean Americans
> Environmentalists
> First Americans
> Generation Obama
> Jewish Americans
> Kids
> Labor
> Latinos
> LGBT
> People of Faith
> Republicans
> Rural Americans
> Seniors
> Small Business
> Sportsmen
> Students
> Veterans & Military Families
> Women

States
> (list of all the states)

Blog

Store

McCain Website Hierarchy 10-06-09

Home

About
        About John McCain
        About Cindy McCain
        About Sarah Palin
        Why John McCain
        Courageous Service
        Cindy's Travels
        McCain Timeline
        Strategy Briefing
        Photo Gallery

Issues
        On the Issues
        American Energy
        Economic Plan
        Iraq
        Health Care
        Education
        Climate Change
        Homeland Security
        National Service
        Border Security
        Human Dignity & Life
        Fighting Crime
        Second Amendment
        Veterans
        Judicial Philosophy
        Technology
        Government Reform
        National Security
        Decision Center

News & Media
        News

Multimedia
Press Releases
Speeches
Decision Center
TV Ads

Events

Campaign Calendar
McCain Nation

Blog

McCain Blog
Spread the Word
McCain Report

Coalitions

African American Coalition
American Indians for McCain
Americans with Disabilities for McCain
Arab Americans for McCain
Asian Americans for McCain
Bikers for McCain
Catholics for McCain
Democrats & Independents for McCain
Environmental Stewardship Coalition
Farm and Ranch Team
Future Leaders for McCain
Health Care Professionals
Honest and Open Election Committee
Hispanics for McCain
Jewish Advisory Coalition
Lawyers for McCain Coalition
Lebanese Americans for McCain
Racing Fans for McCain
Small Business Leaders
Sportsmen for McCain
Veterans for McCain
Women for McCain

Action

Join Team McCain
Volunteer
Action Center
McCainSpace
Ensure an Honest Election

Register to Vote
National Leadership Team
Military and Overseas Voting
Absentee Ballots
In Your State
Contact Us
Campaign Internships
Login

Store

Contribute

APPENDIX C

<u>**The Democratic Party Web Site Hierarchy 10-06-08**</u>

Home

Blog

Our Party
>   What We Stand For
>   The Democratic Platform
>   50-State Strategy
>   About the DNC
>   Party Organization
>   Democratic Leaders
>   Party History
>   Voting Rights Institute
>   National Lawyers Council

Action
>   Get your Democracy Bond
>   Write a Letter to the Editor
>   Find or Create an Event
>   Create a Fundraising Page
>   Start a Blog
>   Write to Congress
>   Find Local Democrats
>   Join an Online Group
>   Get on the Email List
>   Invite Your Friends to Join
>   Volunteer
>   Register to Vote
>   Make a Contribution

Agenda
>   Healthcare for All
>   Energy Independence
>   Secure Retirement
>   National Security

Economic Stewardship
Open Government
Science & Technology
Environment & Climate Change
Immigration Reform
Civil Rights & Liberties

Local

People

African Americans
Asian Americans
Disability Community
Faith in Action
Hispanics
LGBT Community
Native Americans
Rural Americans
Seniors and Retirees
Small Business Community
Union Members & Families
Veterans & Military Families
Women
Young People & Students

Press

Latest Press Releases
Democratic Radio Addresses

Contact

Español

The Republican Web Site Hierarchy 10-06-08

News
      Press
      Research
      Speeches
      Rising tide
      Websites
            John McCain for President
            The White House
            National Republican Senatorial Committee
            National Republican Congressional Committee
            Republican Governors Association
            GOPConvention.com
            MeetBarackObama.com
            GOPPlatform2008.com
      RSS Feeds
      Vote Fraud
      Keeping Score
      Myth Buster
      Eye on Iraq

Blog
      RNC Blog
      Chairman Duncan's Blog
      McCain/Palin Campaign Blog
      McCain Report
      McCain Blogette

Take Action
      Register to Vote
      Volunteer
      Make a Contribution
      Create a MyGOP Space
            MyHome
            MyProfile
            MyBlog
            MyNews

MyTeam
MyActionCenter
MyCampaigns
MyTools
MyMultimedia
MyCoolStuff
MyPreferences
Call Your Elected Officials
Write Your Elected Officials
Sign Petitions
Call Talk Radio
Write Newspaper Editors
McCain Nation House Party Tool
McCain Events Calendar

Coalitions

African American Coalition
American Indians for McCain
Americans with Disabilities for McCain
Arab Americans for McCain
Asian Americans for McCain
Bikers for McCain
Catholics for McCain
Democrats and Independents for McCain
Environmental Stewardship Coalition
Farm and Ranch Team
Future Leaders for McCain
Healthcare Professionals
Honest and Open Election Committee
Hispanics for McCain
Jewish Advisory Coalition
Lawyers for McCain
Lebanese-Americans for McCain
Racing Fans for McCain
Small Business Leaders
Sportsmen for McCain
Veterans for McCain
Women

Issues

About the GOP

Party Leadership
GOP History
Party Platform

GOPPlatform2008.com
2004 Party Platform
Rules Of The Republican Party
Counsel's Office

State Parties
GOP Stuff
GOP Store
GOP Downloads
Screen Savers
Desktop Backgrounds
Buddy Icons
George W. Bush Store
John McCain Store
For Your Blog
Webstickers
RSS Feeds
GOP Toolbar

Connect
State Parties
Other Links
Contact Us
Sign Up for Mobile Updates
GOP Jobs
Political Education
Internships
Victory Centers
McCain Events Calendar

Donors
The Chairman's Advisory Board
The President's Club
Presidential Victory Team
Republican Eagles
Republican Regents
RNC Majority Fund
Sustaining Members
Team 100
Young Eagles

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VITA

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This thesis was typed by Jennifer Small.