
Oh What a Gendered Web We Weave: Deconstructing Digital Discourse in Political Web Sites

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Abstract

The rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web spawned a utopian rhetoric of cyber-democracy. Virtual spaces, such as list serves, bulletin boards, and virtual communities, contributed to this optimistic outlook by promoting ideologies of political, social, and cultural equality, unrestricted access to information, and a connectivity that never before existed. This research challenges this utopian aesthetic and expands the scholarship on gender and the Internet by comparing the rhetorical strategies in the official web sites of the European Green Party and The Green Party of the United States. Both of these web sites produce valuable information regarding the intersections of gender, culture, technology, and political rhetoric. I argue that there is a need to conduct transdisciplinary research that links traditional rhetorical methods to social science and natural science methods to form a more complete picture of how the Internet, and the people who use it, function to promote, subvert, challenge, and reinforce all aspects of our everyday lives including political messages.

Introduction

Almost twenty years ago, the rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web spawned a utopian rhetoric of cyber-democracy. Virtual spaces, such as list serves, bulletin boards, and virtual communities, contributed to this optimistic outlook by promoting ideologies of political, social, and cultural equality, unrestricted access to information, and a connectivity that never before existed. But even with this utopian promise, early cyber-theorists like Howard Rheingold (1993) and Dale Spender (1995) argued for a more realistic platform and claimed that if humans interact in specific ways offline, they will continue to act in these same ways online. The utopian dream for a cyber-democracy may not have emerged,

but what did emerge was a political forum—one where many ideologies share, challenge, and subvert mainstream political viewpoints. What lagged behind this burst of activity was a critical approach to understanding the messages.

In their discussion of oppositional politics, Kahn and Kellner (2005) argued that a critical reconstructive approach is necessary in order to understand how the Internet and World Wide Web, 'facilitated the worldwide emergence of the anti-globalization, anti-war, and anti-capitalism movements' in order to understand how political ideologies are simultaneously defined and shaped online (75–76). To this end, Kahn and Kellner advocated the use of tracking software to document connections in a political web sphere. While this idea has merit, mapping or tracking connections fails to get to the nuances, intensity, and depth of the messages on these activist websites. Therefore, it is also necessary to examine individual sites to analyze specific political messages. Rhetorical criticism can do this. In this project I rely on rhetorical criticism to understand the online political messages of two political parties active in the environmental movement—the European Green Party and the Green Party USA. I examined each organization's official websites within the time frame of January 1, 2007 – February 1, 2007.¹ Specifically, I examined each site's discursive and visual metaphors that supported and constituted their political messages.

Research question

This research expands the scholarship on gender and the Internet and compares the gendered rhetorical strategies in the official web sites of the European Green Party and The Green Party of the United States. Conceptualizing language in this way helps us to understand that women and men use both masculine and feminine language styles. When and where they use them depends largely on the context of the interactions. This is especially important when online and negotiating identity in an ambiguous world. While we may know, in general, who is online with us (such as when we are in a online message board or email); we may not know who, specifically, is there. Scholarship in online gendered language

is getting more attention, but what is absent are the ways in which political entities like the Green Party use their web sites to persuade and call to action. To address this gap in scholarship I considered the discursive and visual messages on the web sites.

In rhetorical criticism there are four types of research questions that focus on the rhetor, the audience, situation, or the message. Those that focus on the rhetor address the relationship between the rhetors and their rhetoric. This considers the motives and worldviews or how the rhetoric functions for the rhetor. Questions that focus on the audience look at the relationship between the artifact and the audience. These types of questions do not address the actual effects on the audience, but, rather, on the kind of audience the artifact constructs (the preferred audience). It also functions to facilitate certain values or ideologies. When examining the context, the rhetorical critic looks at the impact of a particular crisis by analyzing the definitions used by the rhetor, or the audiences' perceptions of a crisis situation. The fourth type of research question considers the message. This is the most common research question in rhetorical criticism and focuses on the specific features of the artifact. Researchers ask what are the arguments the artifact constructed and what types of metaphors are used and why. In rhetorical criticism the research questions do not mention the specific artifact because the research question is larger than the specific artifact. This makes it possible to analyze more than one set of artifacts to answer the questions. The research question that emerged from my analysis considers the message and asked how the gendered metaphors on political environmental web sites generate support for, or challenge, gendered cultural norms, values and ideologies?

Contribution to rhetorical theory

Symbols and metaphors are integral parts of culture and language. They are, according to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), naturalized forms that do more than help us to distinguish what *has* meaning. They are the ways we decide what *is meaningful* in our lives. Our use of metaphors is much more than a 'matter of words' (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 3). Metaphors are a part of our conceptual systems and we are not normally aware of them.

Consider the concept, argument, as represented in Western culture through the 'argument as war' metaphor. We often 'fight to loose weight', or refer to the government's 'war on drugs'. In business we strive for the 'win-win' deal and, in the family, we hear parents often say that, 'it is a constant battle' getting the kids to bed. We do not just talk about arguments in terms of war, our arguments are defined by war. Many of the things we do in arguments are structured around the concept of war. For example, we win and loose debates. The language of argument is not a poetic, fanciful symbol. It is a literal behaviour. We talk about argument in this way because we conceive it this way and we act according to the ways we conceive of things.

Around the same time Lakoff and Johnson (2003) first began considering metaphorical concepts in the early 1980's, feminist scholars were beginning to address the differences in male and female speech.² In her seminal book, *Language and Women's Place*, Robin Lakoff (1975) focused on women-centred speech that relied on the use of metaphors of connection and cooperation. In contrast, men, according to Lakoff, relied on metaphors that valued competition. Early feminist analysis like Lakoff's (1975) focused on language differences in Western culture. If the dominant power or hegemony in western culture is the white male, then the most commonly used metaphors are those more closely associated with, and valued by, that particular group. Gender also played an important role in the work of all three scholars but in different ways. For George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003), gender played an indirect role in their scholarship. While they did not specifically identify gender differences, as white males, they conceptualized their world from the power-up position accepted by communication scholarship at that time. Robin Lakoff (1975) conceptualized her world from the power-down position. She considered the direct connection between gender and language use and noted the difficulties women faced when trying to negotiate their 'place' in a male-dominated world. Theorizing about gender *differences* has generally been abandoned in today's feminist scholarship. More recent work on language use, communication, and rhetoric examines gendered language from a cultural perspective that considers context in which to better understand masculine and feminine languages.

Significance

I became interested in the Green Party movement in the United States in the 1990's. At the time I was an undergraduate student active in a national environmental and consumer advocacy group and an avid Internet user. The combination of my political activism, online activity, and my immersion in communication and rhetorical theory forms the basis of nearly all of my research. I continue to examine areas that consider the intersections of language, persuasion, political activism, and gender.

Rhetorical metaphor criticism and feminist theory ground this research. Rhetoric is part of the process of human communication. Rhetoric may be studied in terms of process but it emerges in a communicative event (Hauser 2002). In other words, meanings happen within contexts, and there is an interaction between the rhetorical event and the situation where it emerged. Rhetoric requires choice and conscious action, produces social cooperation, and is both a method and a practice used to understand and shape ideas. Rhetoric requires an audience. Using metaphor analysis as rhetorical criticism allows us to negotiate meaning by filtering them through cultural lenses and making comparisons to increase understanding. Metaphors are not only decorative language but, as Hauser (2002), Lakoff and Johnson (2003), Foss (1996) and many other theorists remind us, are a way we constitute our reality. Gerald Hauser (2002) refers to this as, 'the management of symbols in order to coordinate social action' (5).

This project also relies on feminist rhetorical criticism as conceptualized by Sonja Foss (1996). Here, one asks *how* the metaphor is used to address and influence gender, cultural, or age differences. For example, in their article on the Mothers of the *Plaza de Mayo*, Foss and Domenici (1999) examined how the metaphors around 'haunting' and 'motherhood' were used for social change in Argentina. In addition to feminist criticism, I incorporated concepts from rhetorical method based on Black's (1962) suggestion that metaphors can be analyzed using pragmatics. Here, one must also ask *why* a certain metaphor is used. In other words, what is the actual *function* of the metaphor? For example, Ausmus (1998) used pragmatic analysis in his discussion of the metaphor 'nuclear winter' and claimed that it [the metaphor] 'serves the practical function of focusing arguments, and constituting arguments that resulted in the

current policies and agreements between Russia and the United States' (81). Metaphors, therefore, have the potential to reshape our conception of knowledge.

Earlier in this paper I discussed the concept of 'argument as war' that Lakoff and Johnson (2003) identified in *Metaphors We Live By*. But this is not the only way to conceptualize persuasive and argumentative metaphors. Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin (1995) re-conceptualized them within the framework of invitational rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric applies feminist ideas of power (not domination) to support the process of communication, since domination is a patriarchal construct that must be abandoned (2–5). According to these two scholars, using invitational rhetoric establishes 'a non-hierarchical, non-judgemental, non-adversarial framework in order to develop a relationship of equality, respect, and appreciation' (Foss & Griffin 1995, 3). Unlike the concept of 'argument as war', Foss and Griffin reconceptualize argument as an *invitation* to change. The concept of *invitation* is vital to this framework. *We invite* our audience to change; we do not *insist* they must. In framing it in this way, we recognize that we, and our audiences, have valuable and legitimate experiences and perspectives. This results in *transformation*, not persuasion. Sonja and Karen Foss (1994) explain it in this way:

Transformation means growth or change. It may involve changing your opinion on an issue, gaining information about a subject you did not have before, or adopting a new behavior. Transformation also includes the more subtle kind of change that occurs when you incorporate new information into your systems of thought, allowing you to imagine and generate new ideas (3).

Invitational rhetoric is not without its critics. Some scholars (Bruner 1996; Cloud 2004; Dow 1995; Wood 2004) charge that invitational rhetoric suggests a homogeneous feminism (not feminisms) and is rooted in biological essentialism. These scholars also remind us that rhetoric and conflict are not inherently coercive, but have been socially constructed as such within a framework of patriarchy. In 1996 an entire issue of the journal *Argumentation and Advocacy* dealt with new conceptualizations of rhetoric that included Richard Fulkerson's call for transcending the essentialist approach to develop a new metaphor that embraced the basic dimensions of invitational rhetoric

without bio-essentialism (Fulkerson 1996). The scholars in this special issue recognized that conflict is a mode for social change and can be a positive experience. In his recent work on rhetoric and love, Joshua Gunn (2008) advocates the use of invitational rhetoric as a way in which to 'rethink the rhetorical subject through a new metaphor of seeing as "connection" or "mediation"' (20). While Foss and Griffin (1995) were heavily influenced by the work of Sally Miller Gearhart (1979), which is bio-essentialist in nature, invitational rhetoric transcends this limited viewpoint. Foss and Griffin (1995) claim that within the framework of an argument, the metaphor both provides structure and support for the action, and the structure of the metaphor itself argues. This is a male dominated space that needs to be exposed and examined. If the audience understands and accepts these relationships, they will agree with the communicator. This makes invitational rhetoric and rhetorical metaphor criticism well suited for Internet-based cultural research.

Artifact descriptions

European Greens

With its bright yellow banner across the top of the home page, the web site for the European Green Party is aesthetically pleasing, clearly designed and easy to navigate. The European Green Party (EGP) became active in the 1960's, and the official European Green party received its charter in 1984.³ The European Federation of Green Parties has 33 member countries and continues to be a driving political force in European politics (European Greens 2008). The official web site for the European Green party includes a history of the green movement, links to the affiliated parties and allies, and includes promotional information such as press releases, news stories, and events calendars. This extensive web site also includes many of the official documents important to the green political movement such as the official party charter, a budget statement, and the Green Party statutes. The web design follows the standard western style with the menu on the left and a banner on the top. The color scheme is dominated by yellow, green and black.

Green Party USA

'Join the revolution'. This banner slogan tops every page on the Green Party USA (GPUSA) web site. Like its European counterpart, the Green Party of the United States has one official web site that links to the affiliated state chapters. GPUSA gained national attention as a political party in 1996 when they ran Ralph Nader for president for the first time. They are an official political party in the United States since 2001 and have over 300,000 official registered party members.⁴ According to their history page, they were formed as a 'reincarnation of the older Association for State Green Parties' (GP About Us, 2008). Their goals are to grow the existing state parties and to form parties in all of the 50 states and US territories. The official website also follows the western style design. Green dominates the color scheme and, in addition to many of the same types of documents that the EGP includes on their web site, the GPUSA includes donation forms, an online store, and local 'take action' kits for volunteers to download.

Method

Rhetoric has many definitions: from flowery speech to empty bombastic language with no substance. But rhetorical criticism is more than this. Rhetorical criticism considers the three dimensions of rhetoric: that humans originated rhetoric, using symbols as the medium, with the purpose of communication. Every symbolic choice we make is based on how we conceptualize our world and we act according to the ways we conceive things. We invent symbols so that we can communicate about our world. For example, the symbol (or word) 'cup' has no natural relationship to a container for beverages. A tree in the woods is simply a tree but it symbolizes something else when it is a Christmas tree or the tree of life image common in Celtic mythology. Rhetoric is also more than discursive communication. It exists in all forms of communication—from art forms to dance to music to visual. Communication is the purpose of rhetoric. Rhetoric and communication are both a process of the exchange of ideas and a form of persuasion; a means of self-discovery and

a way in which we constitute our realities. The symbols we create, and the rhetoric we use, are filtered through our personal views, values, and ideologies. But this is a muddy process and problems occur when intended meanings (conscious intent) and unintended meanings (interpretation other than original) are not the same.

Rhetorical criticism follows a four-step process that includes general analysis, identification, categorization, and a focused analysis. The general analysis identifies context and dimension. The second step includes isolating and identifying both tenor and vehicle metaphors. Vehicle metaphors are those where the rhetor conceptualizes a particular subject. For example, a college student may describe her Asian roommate as a 'pig' to explain her roommate's lack of tidiness. Tenor metaphors are those that represent a worldview. Used in this way, the college student may theorize that, since her roommate is Asian, she could describe all Asian roommates as 'pigs.' Tenor metaphors are often rooted in stereotypes but can be both positive and negative. A positive example is Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech that used the tenor metaphors of American values and the Constitution to advocate for minority civil liberties. After the metaphors are identified, the researcher sorts them into patterns and groups, and then proceeds to the final step—a detailed analysis, in order to explain the artifact's production of meaning.

I followed this four-step process in connection with Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) concepts on metaphors and Black's (1992) ideas of pragmatic metaphor where I considered the actual function of the metaphor (or why it is used). In addition, I rely on feminist theory that considers how the metaphor is used to address such things as gender, culture, and age differences (Foss 2004). Consider again the 'argument as war' metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) claim that this is a 'metaphor we live by'. Feminist linguist Deborah Tannen (1998) claims that the metaphor of argument is a building block of American culture. It is so strong that it is used to justify all American values and ideologies.

Findings

Identification and categorization of metaphors

This analysis revealed that the four most common metaphors were those that conceptualized the environment from a masculine perspective such as an economic commodity (i.e. limited resources, profit), nature as hierarchy (with humans at the pinnacle), and nature as a container (humans are part of nature or separate from it). ‘Argument as war’, as described by Tannen (1998) and Lakoff and Johnson (2003), dominated all the persuasive strategies on both web sites (Green Party USA, European Green). Both web sites also use a limited number of feminine metaphors. For example, describing the environment in terms of music (such as harmony) and as an entity (Gaia, tree). There were also several metaphors of cooperation and connection similar to those identified by Robin Lakoff (1975) as ‘woman’s language’.

Research Question

How do the gendered metaphors on political environmental web sites generate support for, or challenge, gendered cultural norms, values and ideologies?

As discussed earlier in this article, questions that refer to the rhetor address how the metaphors function to express, create, and explain worldviews (vehicle metaphors). This idea also supports the effectiveness of the rhetors’ messages. In this analysis I considered what types of metaphors were used and how they challenged or supported gendered cultural norms in order to promote the groups’ values and ideologies. This is most evident in the ways in which the European Greens and the Green Party USA share many of the same values and ideologies. The Green Party USA lists these as the ‘Ten Key Values’ and the European Greens refer to them as their ‘Guiding Principles’ (see Table 1). While these principles may be listed differently, they are quite similar. The European Party’s Guiding Principles incorporate all ten of the Green Party USA values. As part of eco-development, the EGP lists ecological sustainability, equity and social justice, and gender equality. As part of global security

they include prevention of armed conflicts, peaceful resolution to current conflicts, combating racism, and fighting global poverty. They also advocate an urgent need for nuclear disarmament and for a new nuclear test ban treaty. Advocating a new citizenship is their commitment to human rights that include immigration rights to refuge and asylum, and the basic human rights of a healthy and clean environment, free education, paid work, democratic control and open institutions of power (European Greens, History, 2008).

Table 1. Overview of the basic values and ideologies of the European & US Green Parties

Green Party USA	European Green Party
Ten Key Values	Three Guiding Principles
Grassroots Democracy Social Justice Ecological Wisdom Non-Violence Decentralization Community-Based Economics Feminism Diversity Responsibility Future Focus	Eco-Development Global Security New Citizenship

Green Party USA

In the ‘Ten Key Values of the Green Party’ there are multiple instances of all of the masculine metaphors. Not only do they appear as singular examples; they are often combined with other masculine and sometimes feminine metaphors. For example, the metaphor of commodity occurs in the discussion of social justice. ‘All persons should have the rights and opportunity to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment’. Phrases such as ‘benefit equally’, ‘afforded us’, and ‘distribution’ conceptualized the environment as an economic entity.

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The phrase 'afforded us by society' is especially problematic in that it makes the assumption that those in control (within a patriarchy) still control who gets what and when. However, there are also feminine metaphors of connection and cooperation in this same statement (i.e. 'all persons' the use of 'us') that demonstrate that the GPUSA understands there is a complementary way to understand this value.

The masculine metaphor of container also dominates this web site. In this quote taken from the section on gender equity, the GPUSA uses it as a positive strategy. They write, 'We have inherited a social system based on male domination of politics and economics. We call for the replacement of the cultural ethics of domination and control with more cooperative ways of interacting that respect differences of opinion and gender'. Here, the container is a patriarchal 'system' that needs fixing. The container is a machine that requires repair in order to run efficiently. Just like the commodity metaphor, in this example there is use of both masculine and feminine metaphors with the masculine dominating the message. Other examples of the container metaphor are found in discussions of breaking down the ideological barriers such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression.

The strongest masculine metaphors occur when linked in groups of three or more, such as the following example that links the container, commodity, and hierarchy metaphors. 'Human societies must operate with the understanding that we are part of nature, not separate from nature. We support a sustainable society which utilizes resources in such a way that future generations will benefit and not suffer from the practices of our generation.' The container metaphors include 'human societies', 'operate' (like a machine), and 'sustainable societies'. The commodification of the environment is found in the metaphors of 'support' and 'utilizes resources'. The combination of hierarchy and container is found in the idea that we are 'part of nature' not 'separate from it'. This example also links three or more feminine metaphors of cooperation and connection (i.e. 'we', 'future generations', and 'part of'). Use of feminine language as a primary metaphor occurred infrequently on the Green Party USA web site. I found no instances of sex typing nature as female (i.e. mother earth). There were only a few descriptions that indirectly described the

environment in terms of music or harmony and only one weak example of the metaphor of entity, an image of the Hispanic migrant worker who represents the female as inherently connected to earth.⁵

In addition to these discursive examples of masculine and feminine metaphors, there were also visual instances of these metaphors on the Green Party USA web site. These visual metaphors emerge as part of the video production that includes, but is not limited to, screen time, framing, and importance of dialogue. In this case, the masculine and feminine metaphors presented conflicting interpretations of the political messages. The most striking example of the visual conflicting with the discursive message comes in the example of an ad that is available on the GPUSA web site. In this video I found that two of the ten 'key values' (Feminism and Diversity) did not coincide with the video's visual representation of those values. I did not notice this disparity until I accidentally started the video without the sound. It was then that the disparity emerged.⁶ The text of these two key values is as follows:

Feminism and gender equity: *We believe it is important to value cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious and spiritual diversity, and to promote the development of respectful relationships across these lines.*

Respect for diversity: *We believe that the many diverse elements of society should be reflected in our organizations and decision-making bodies, and we support the leadership of people who have been traditionally closed out of leadership roles (...) (GPUSA, Values, 2006).*

The video is a 30 second ad produced in March, 2006 entitled 'A Secure and Free America' to promote membership in the Green Party USA. There are four speakers: two males and two females. The speakers' ethnicity includes two whites, one Black, and one Asian, and they range in age from mid thirties to mid fifties. The ad is a series of quick cuts and overlapping statements. The dialogue is as follows:

White male: *I want a secure free and healthy planet for*

Asian female: *our children and our children's children.*

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- Black male: *I've realized that the Bush administration lied to us*
- White male: *lied to us*
- Asian female: *lied to us*
- White female: *lied to us about why the US invaded Iraq.*
- White male: *I'm concerned about the disappearance about American*
- Black male: *jobs, benefits, and health coverage.*
- White female: *It seems that the Democrats are acting*
- Asian female: *more and more like Republicans on very important issues.*

While, on the surface, there appears to be equal representation by gender (2 females : 2 males) and ethnic diversity, further analysis of the production aspects of the video reveal something quite different. In film technique framing sets up the power of the objects in the frame. Those framed from the right looking down at the (perceived) audience or framed in the direct centre are in a power-up position. Those framed in the bottom of the screen's field of vision are in a power-down position. Those with more power also have longer screen times, more speaking lines, with these lines often being the most important. Those in power also are more likely to be framed showing more of their body or in full close-ups. Close examination of this advertisement revealed that the white male has the most power followed by (in descending order) the Asian female, white female, and the Black male (see Table 2).

Table 2. Power distribution

Actor	Word Count	Appearance Count	Starts Phrase Count	Ends Phrase Count	Framing Preferences
White male	19	3	2	1	Power-up
Asian female	18	3	0	3	Mixed
White female	10	2	1	1	Mixed
Black male	14	2	1	1	Power-down

In the ten scenes, the white male appears three times (two long scenes and one short). He is the first person in the ad and he has the most script. He is always framed in a power-up position (to the right or centre and looking down or directly at the audience). At one point he is centred in a frame within frame. The two females' appearances are similar in their scripts and framing, but there are differences. The Asian woman appears three times and the white female only twice. The Asian female's script length is nearly twice as long as that of the white female's script. The Asian female never starts a new phrase or sentence, but she does complete the ad's dialogue. The white female starts one new phrase and contributes to the 'lied to us' montage once. They are both framed in power-up shots and are shown looking down upon or straight into unseen audience's eyes. While those are power-up features there is a subtle power-down shift in that neither of them have a close-up. The person representing the least power in this ad is the Black male. He has the least screen time, and he is nearly always looking up at the unseen audience (a strong power-down position). Like the white female, he starts one sentence and ends one sentence but he is never shown with a full headshot or close-up.

This ad exemplifies how the visual messages can contradict discursive messages. Considering framing and screen time as metaphors of power reveals that, although the GPUSA created this video with gender equity and ethnic diversity in mind, the power still follows stereotypical patterns of power with the hegemony firmly in the grip of white, middle-aged males. Ethnic diversity is also stereotypically represented with one token Black and one Asian. There are no Hispanics, Native Americans, or religious minorities shown. Finally, there is no age diversity (no youths or elderly) in ad.

European Greens

Commodity, container, and hierarchy are also found on this web site, but the most frequent metaphor used by the European Green Party is the 'argument as war' metaphor. It is found in press releases, resolutions, minutes and agendas from meetings, and in nearly every document and page on the web site. For example, in the brief agenda for the 'Greening

of the Streets' program there are two uses of the word 'fight'. In the first instance they list a call to 'fight against climate change in cities'. The second time it appears is in the statement, 'How to fight climate change policies' (European Green Party 2006). I identified over 150 instances of this masculine metaphor.

Like the Green Party USA's video example, there was also one striking set of examples where the visual messages challenged the discursive messages. This is found in the series of photographs that document a conference in Geneva in 2006. The photos are by Raimo Oksala, the 'unofficial photographer' of the EGP.⁷ On the surface, the images appear gender-balanced. There were 26 photos that focused on males, 24 on females, and 31 mixed groups. However while the number of photos were balanced and reinforced gender equality, the actions in the photos were not. They represented gender norms and stereotypes. When small groups of males were shown in the photos, they tended to be action or working photos. Men were depicted deep in work at a conference table, leading a discussion, or as the speaker at a podium in a plenary session or keynote address. There were more photos of a single male as the primary focus of the shot than of a single female (even when the female is the topic of the image such as the photo documenting Ulrike Lunacek's major speech).⁸ Women were shown in support roles at the conference. They were more likely to be shown in outdoor images, away from the working panels. There were additional photos of women with babies and women taking care of other people (usually men). These included women working at an information booth or giving directions. Men were never depicted in this way. In fact, there are no photos of men with children, or working at information tables. The photos, therefore, were visual metaphors that challenged the guiding principle of gender equity. While the two major spokespersons for the EGP, for example, share the duties equally on paper, they are represented in stereotypical gendered norms of patriarchy, as are other members of the European Green Party.

Both web sites mix masculine and feminine metaphors that confuse the primary messages of equity and diversity. The GPUSA site is dominated by metaphors of commodification (especially with their numerous pleas for money). Both stress cooperation and connection (feminine). For the

GPUSA this is exemplified by their tag line that appears on every page, 'Be a card-carrying member of the Green Party for just \$36', and by including hyperlinks to more websites outside of the Green Party family. The Green Party USA also relies on the feminine cooperative metaphor 'we'. However, when used in this way, the message can be misunderstood as strongly individualistic with 'we' representing an exclusionary confrontational message rather than an inclusionary one. The European Greens are better at synchronizing the discursive, and visual, metaphors and messages and they also use far more feminine metaphors. But they link to fewer web sites outside the Green Party which may contradict their inclusive values.

Conclusions

This rhetorical criticism considered how the gendered metaphors on political web sites generate support for, or challenge, gendered cultural norms, values, and ideologies and revealed that, while the values and guiding principles documented on these web sites promote gender equality and diversity, both the European Green Party and the Green Party USA are still stuck in the comfort zone of gendered stereotypes. This is not a negative criticism of their political ideologies, but rather, a recommendation that both entities must continue to work to insure that their discursive and their visual messages are in sync.

Although both political parties share the basic tenets of feminism and inclusion, there are places where they can improve their messages. For example, neither web site directly feminized the environment. There were no references of mother earth or Gaia. There were no implications of earth as a victim and no references of female body parts as environmental metaphors. However, there is a need to re-evaluate the discursive and visual messages so that the discursive messages that challenge cultural norms are reinforced by equally strong visual messages.

There is much to be learned from analyzing political web sites that focus not only on the messages but also on the rhetor, the context, and the audience. Both of these web sites, and many like them, can produce valuable information regarding the intersections of gender, culture, technology,

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and political rhetoric. There is an opportunity to conduct transdisciplinary research that links traditional rhetorical methods to social science and natural science methods to form a more complete picture of how the Internet, and the people who use it, function to promote, subvert, challenge, and reinforce all aspects of our everyday lives including political messages. Whether it includes research such as Kahn and Kellner's (2005) use of hyperlink analysis using tracking software, or an in-depth analysis of the design and heuristics that supports the web designs, transdisciplinary collaboration is essential.

The goal is transformation.

Notes

- 1 I chose this time frame because I was 'in residence' as a 2007 Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society (IAS-STS) at the Inter-University Research Centre for Technology, Work and Culture in Graz, Austria, who also supported this research project.
- 2 The original publication date of *Metaphors We Live By* was 1980.
- 3 The Web site for the European Green Party is located at: <http://www.europeangreens.org>.
- 4 Not all the states in the USA recognize the Green Party. The web site is located at: www.gp.org.
- 5 This could also represent a Gaia metaphor but it only occurs once and I am not convinced it is a significant example.
- 6 The ad can be accessed at this URL: http://www.gp.org/promos/2006_03_promo2.shtml.
- 7 Due to copyright restrictions no photos from this gallery are included directly in this article. I encourage you to look at the photos yourself on Oksala's web site. This photo gallery is located at: http://www.dom007.com/galleria/europ_gr.html.
- 8 Ulrike Lunacek is one of the top Green party leaders and an official spokesperson. Phillippe Lamberts is the co-spokesperson.

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