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# MoveOn: The Rhetoric of Polarization

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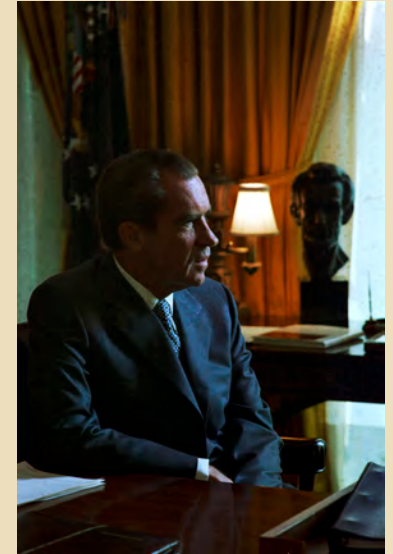
*MoveOn:*  
The Rhetoric of Polarization

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## Introduction

Today's political landscape is deeply polarized. From liberals to conservatives or progressives to non-progressives, there are serious divides that are pervasive throughout politics. King and Anderson were the first to articulate a conceptualization of the rhetoric of polarization in their article, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."<sup>1</sup> The media environment has changed dramatically since they first published their article in 1971, but their conceptualization of the rhetoric of polarization is still useful in studying the polarization found in today's politics. With the advent of the user friendly World Wide Web in the 1990s, came a new interactive form of media that is now used by politicians and activists. One group that is responsible for using the Internet to contribute to and sustain an environment of polarization is MoveOn.org. This paper examines how MoveOn has used the rhetoric of polarization in its member emails. Before discussing the emails that were sent, a brief history of the group is provided followed by an explanation of the rhetoric of polarization.



## MoveOn.org

The internet has changed how people become informed about and engaged in politics.<sup>2</sup> Barack Obama's campaign in 2008 is an example of the use of the Internet in politics. His campaign incorporated social networking, voter outreach, volunteer opportunities and video clips on its website. This model of Internet-based politics was inspired by the online political activist organization MoveOn.org.<sup>3</sup> MoveOn is arguably the "largest and most forceful voice in digital era politics" which is extremely effective in mobilizing people and money in both the virtual and real world.<sup>4</sup> Many activists consider its revolutionary use of the Internet as a new form of participatory politics in its ability to bypass mainstream and corporate politics and media.<sup>5</sup>



MoveOn was founded in 1998 by married couple Wes Boyd and Joan Blades when they sent an e-mail petition to about 100 friends calling on Congress to censure President Clinton for his indiscretion with Monica Lewinsky and "move on" to more pressing political issues.<sup>6</sup> The petition generated more than 400,000 replies and prompted Boyd and Blades to form MoveOn.org.<sup>7</sup> MoveOn members are united by their support for progressive issues and a different type of politics. They pay no membership dues but do contribute to the organization's agenda setting. According to Boyd, the goal of the organization is to bring "as much diversity to the power structure as possible. This is, ordinary citizens... who can provide the countervailing influence against the notion that some kind of inside-the-beltway-elite can make all our decisions"<sup>8</sup> MoveOn combines e-activism with offline engagement in protest and electoral politics. According to Carty, by encouraging information sharing, dialogue, and debate within the political landscape, MoveOn has uncovered a vast number of frustrated citizens eager to revitalize democracy.<sup>9</sup> Today MoveOn has over five million members on its email list.<sup>10</sup> MoveOn saw its membership increase

significantly after 9/11. According to Rohlinger and Brown, journalistic accounts suggest that the strategic hiring of Eli Pariser, a long-time antiwar activist, can be credited for the boom in MoveOn members.<sup>11</sup> Pariser, who was hired a few months after 9/11, brought with him thousands of antiwar activists who were determined to prevent Bush from further military engagement in the Middle East and, when this failed, set on simply stopping Bush.<sup>12</sup>

Although MoveOn's main focus has been on ending the Iraq war, it has also successfully been involved in a number of other progressive issues. For example, MoveOn had a significant impact on the 2004 and 2006 electoral process. In 2004 MoveOn joined America Coming Together (ACT) to create the 'Leave No Voter Behind' campaign. The campaign emphasized face-to-face voter mobilization through social networks and is credited with increasing voter turnout by seven percentage points.<sup>13</sup> According to Carty, MoveOn's anti-war stance during the 2006 campaign played a significant role in the Democrats' successfully reclaiming the House and Senate. Additionally, MoveOn members donated enough money to establish the 'Call for Change' program that used web-based tools and a call-reporting system to reach voters.<sup>14</sup> Middleton and Green found that the phone bank was the most effective volunteer calling program ever studied, and that it increased voter turnout by almost 4 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

MoveOn's structure itself also has contributed to the increase in membership. As Postmes and Brunsting have argued the internet allows social movement actors to unite and act more easily, attracting more new members than otherwise would be possible.<sup>16</sup> According to Chadwick, the online environment provides citizens with opportunities to organize their offline engagement in campaigns through physical attendance at rallies and fundraising events, but it also provides a number of online political actions.<sup>17</sup>

Central to organizations such as MoveOn is the creation of a collective identity to help recruit and sustain members. Melucci has defined collective identity as a "shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their actions as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their actions take place."<sup>18</sup> For the Occupy Wall Street movement that is currently occurring, their collective identity is reflected in their slogan "we are the 99 percent." According to Wall "collective identity defines boundaries of who is within the group, what the group believes, how the group sees the world and, ultimately, helps to establish trust, which is essential in getting members to take actions that may be time-consuming, uncomfortable or even dangerous."<sup>19</sup> Employing a rhetoric of polarization is one way in which a collective identity can be created.

The internet provides the essential tool that allows them to stay politically connected and reinforcing their collective identity. Pariser explains, "You would say that MoveOn has a postmodern organizing model. It's opt-in, it's decentralized, and you do it from your home. MoveOn makes it easy for people to participate or not with each solicitation - an approach that embraces the permission-based culture of the Internet, and consumer culture itself".<sup>20</sup> MoveOn's main source of recruitment of members is an email message sent from one of the organizers or forwarded from a family member, friend or colleague. Pariser explains:





*Every member comes to us with the personal endorsement of someone they trust. It is word-of-mouth organizing in electronic form. It has made mixing the personal and the political more socially acceptable. Casually passing on a high-content message to a social acquaintance feels completely natural in a way handing someone a leaflet at a cocktail party never would. The 'tell-a-friend' phenomenon is key to how organizing happens on the Net. A small gesture to friend can contribute to a massive multiplier effect. It is grassroots answer to the corporate consolidation of the media, which has enabled an overwhelmingly conservative punditry to give White House spin real political momentum, and the semblance of truth, simply through intensity and repetition.<sup>21</sup>*

There is no denying that MoveOn is an organization that has been successful in using the internet to mobilize its members and change the political landscape. Given the political influence that MoveOn has, it is worth examining this organization more closely to identify the rhetorical strategies used by MoveOn to create its network of citizens. More specifically, how has MoveOn used the rhetoric of polarization within its emails?

## MoveOn.org's Emails

Twenty-seven emails sent to members from the beginning of October 2007 to mid-January 2008 were analyzed. These emails are representative of typical emails sent to MoveOn members during MoveOn's extensive and defining anti-war period. The timeframe for this study was randomly selected during this period of strong anti-war and anti-Bush sentiment. These emails had an enormous influence on members from creating a reality for them to moving them to action. The majority of the emails, 25, provided members with information. Of these, 24 also involved some coordination of action including asking members to lobby decision makers, sign online petitions, make donations, attend rallies or write letters to the editor. The main purpose of the two emails that did not provide information was the collection of information. These emails solicited feedback from the members about how the organization was doing and asked members to let them know if they were on Facebook. Topics of these 24 emails included voting on an ad that defined what it was to be a progressive, voting on a video of MoveOn's accomplishments, thanking the troops by donating money for phone cards and the 2008 election. However, the majority of the emails, sixteen, focused on President Bush and the main focus of MoveOn during this timeframe--stopping him. With the war in Iraq raging, there was increasing concern that Bush and his administration were setting the stage for a war in Iran, as well. Five of the emails addressed this concern. Four emails focused on the illegal wire tapping by Bush and his administration and four emails addressed Bush's veto of the children's health bill. Three emails addressed Bush's policies related to



pollution credits, media ownership and the Wall Street tax rate. The anti-Bush, anti-administration theme that runs through many of the emails is representative of the larger persuasive messages of MoveOn during the Bush era. Table 1 outlines the topics of the emails reviewed in this analysis.

Table 1: Topics of Emails Analyzed

Topic of Emails	Number of emails	Subtopics
Collection of information	4	Feedback from members about how MoveOn is doing
		Finding out if members are on Facebook
		Vote on video of accomplishments
		Vote on ad defining progressives
President Bush and War	5	Iran, Iraq, Lies
President Bush's Policies	11	Wiretapping (4)
		Child Healthcare (4)
		Media Ownership
		Wall St. Tax Rate
		Pollution Credits
2008 Election	5	Voter turnout, Ballots, Candidates
Thanking the troops	2	Soliciting donations to send phone cards to the troops

## The Rhetoric of Polarization

According to Brownstein (2008), MoveOn often frames issues in terms so polarizing that it risks alienating all but the most committed believers.<sup>22</sup> According to King and Anderson “polarization as a rhetorical phenomenon, may be defined as the process by which an extremely diversified public is coalesced into two or more highly contrasting, mutually exclusive groups sharing a high degree of internal solidarity in those beliefs which the persuader considers salient.”<sup>23</sup> They identified two dimensions of polarization:

1.) “It implies a powerful feeling of solidarity- “strong group cohesiveness, unity, we feeling, human homogenization.”

2.) “It presupposes the existence of a perceived common foe which the group must oppose if it is to preserve the fabric of beliefs out of which the persuader has woven its identity.”<sup>24</sup>

King and Anderson note that to be successful the practitioner of a rhetoric of polarization must have available an audience of potentially sympathetic individuals.<sup>25</sup> Uncommitted individuals are not seen as neutral, but as either potential converts or foes. The goal of using a rhetoric of polarization is to induce uncommitted individuals to chose one of the two competing groups.



King and Anderson note a rhetoric of polarization always encompasses two principal strategies: a strategy of affirmation and a strategy of subversion.<sup>26</sup> A strategy of affirmation involves the selection of images that will promote a strong sense of group identity. A strategy of subversion is concerned with a careful selection of those images that will undermine the ethos of competing groups, ideologies, or institutions.<sup>27</sup> King and Anderson point out that a strategy of affirmation is implied when a communicator’s motive is to persuade potential believers to accept a new concept; a strategy of subversion is implied when a communicator’s motive is to weaken or destroy the credibility of a concept.<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that both strategies are always present in varying degrees when the rhetoric of polarization is used.

Table 2 illustrates King and Anderson’s conceptualization of the rhetoric of polarization. Through the strategy of affirmation solidarity is created through the selection of images that will promote a strong sense of group identity. According to the authors, one rhetorical tactic that can be used to accomplish this is persuading potential believers to accept a new image. Another tactic is the concept of the self-justifying image.<sup>29</sup> The self-justifying image implies a false symbolic depiction of a situation which, by the very nature of the behavior it evokes, makes the originally false conception come true, at least in its consequences.<sup>30</sup> That is, a rhetor creates an image/conception which the audience accepts as true and bases its actions on, and therefore make that false conception come true, at least in terms of the consequences. For example, by defining the “Silent Majority” as a real entity, Nixon prompted modes of behavior that made it a ‘real fiction.’<sup>31</sup> Another example of the self-justifying image can be seen in the current Occupy movement. The Occupy Movement has created a depiction of the United State’s current economic situation as a battle between the 99% versus the richest 1% in the country. By doing this many traditionally different groups have coalesced around the identity of being part of the 99%. Their actions or behaviors are then based on this identity. The consequence is the reinforcement of the originally false conception of the simplistic dichotomy.

Through the strategy of subversion, the ethos of competing groups, ideologies, or institutions is undermined through the careful selection of images. This selection of images creates a reality. The tactics used include weakening or destroying the credibility of a concept or exploiting fears of prejudices.

King and Anderson illustrated the use of a rhetoric of polarization through an examination of the rhetoric of President Nixon.<sup>32</sup> They discussed how Nixon consolidated his constituency as the “silent

Table 2: Rhetoric of Polarization (King and Anderson)

Dimensions	Strategies	Definition	Tactics
Solidarity	Affirmation	The selection of images that will promote a strong sense of group identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade potential believers to accept a new image</li> <li>• Self-Justifying image</li> </ul>
Common Foe	Subversion	The careful selection of images that will undermine the ethos of competing groups, ideologies, or institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To weaken or destroy the credibility of a concept.</li> <li>• Exploitation of fears and prejudices</li> </ul>



majority” and united them on the basis of a common enemy, a shared foe he labeled the “radical-liberal.” Nixon used a rhetoric of polarization to intensify the real differences that already divided the American people. The use of the rhetoric of polarization makes the collective identity a reality, and also provides a definition of a situation upon which the audience will act. In other words, if polarizing rhetoric is successful, it creates a simplified image that highlights a division. If they accept the rhetorical image as true, the subsequent interpretations and actions are based on that image.<sup>33</sup> The rhetoric of polarization is useful, then, because it can create divisions and a collective identity; it also undermines competing groups by defining situations that can influence audience members’ actions related to those situations.

Although King and Anderson have provided a clear conceptualization of the rhetoric of polarization, they have not been without their critics.<sup>34</sup> Raum & Measell acknowledge King and Anderson’s framework, but criticize it for not considering non-message variables.<sup>35</sup> They argue that polarization is a highly complex phenomenon in which message (concrete description devices and copula tactics) and non-message variables (external stimuli, personal dynamism, and confrontation with the opposition) play significant roles. Based on this, Raum and Measell identified some generalizations that may characterize the rhetoric of polarization.<sup>36</sup> First, they argue that the speaker cannot create polarization where none existed before. Second, they argue that polarization is accompanied and often preceded by a highly charged emotional atmosphere. The third generalization is that an agent of polarization views the world as a battle of opposites. According to Raum and Measell, “this world view results in frequent employment of copula tactics, including the drawing of artificial dichotomies and we/they distinctions. These philosophical judgments about “reality” and the opposition are perhaps the most important characteristics of the rhetoric of polarization, for they belie the thought processes of those who seek to polarize and are increasingly polarized by others.”<sup>37</sup> Finally, Raum and Measell believe that an agent of polarization offers only himself as redeemer.<sup>38</sup> They draw attention to the importance of the environment in which polarization is likely to be effective. Table 3 highlights the environmental characteristics of polarization identified by Raum and Measell and provides a brief explanation of each.

**Table 3: Environmental Characteristics of Polarization (Raum and Measell)**

Pre-existing Polarization	The speaker cannot create polarization where none existed before.
Emotionally charged atmosphere	Polarization is accompanied and often preceded by a highly charged emotional atmosphere.
Battle of opposites	An agent of polarization views the world as a battle of opposites.
Self as redeemer	An agent of polarization offers only himself as redeemer.

Finally, because polarization rhetoric always includes both affirmation and subversion, it is important to examine various identification and division techniques organizations use in internal publications that were first identified by George Cheney.<sup>39</sup>

Working from famed rhetorical critic Kenneth Burke, Cheney defines identification as a sense of we-ness, or feelings of membership, shared interest, or solidarity with a larger group.<sup>40</sup> Individuals who share a sense of identification with the organization will see his or her reflection in the social mirror of the collective; the interests of the individual and the organization will overlap and coincide.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, identification



is similar to the concept of collective identity.

Cheney identifies three types of identification techniques, each of which can be used to help to create a feeling of solidarity. The first is the common ground technique in which the rhetor equates or links himself with others in an overt manner. For example, this can be done through discussions of shared values and goals. The common ground technique involves associational processes whereby the concerns of the members are directly or indirectly identified with those of the organization. Cheney identified six tactics within the common ground technique. The first is the expression of concern for the individual. This tactic involves stressing the importance of the people who belong to the organization rather than the organization itself. The second tactic is recognizing individual contributions. This is similar to the first tactic but is more focused on recognizing individuals for their contributions to the organization. Frequently, shared values are highlighted when doing so. The third tactic is espousing shared values where the emphasis is on explicitly stating the commonality of values and beliefs. The fourth tactic is the advocacy of benefits and activities. The organization does not just describe services to the members, but presents membership in the organization as a value in itself.<sup>42</sup> The fifth tactic is praise by outsiders and the sixth is testimonials by employees of the organization. Each of these tactics are useful in creating common ground between organizational members that can result in a strong sense of group identity.



The second identification technique that Cheney discusses is the assumed or transcendent “we” technique.<sup>43</sup> In the assumed “we” technique the processes of affirmation and subversion are interwoven. Uses of the assumed “we” and the corresponding “they” (symbolizing outsiders) can be found when the shared interests of organizational members seem taken for granted.<sup>44</sup> According to the Cheney, the assumed “we” and the corresponding “they” are found in statements where a common bond among members of the organization is taken for granted, but the nature of the relationship is not well defined.<sup>45</sup> The assumed “we” appears in more focused appeals to shared values and goals.<sup>46</sup> Cheney argues that the assumed “we” is both a subtle and powerful identification strategy because it often goes unnoticed.<sup>47</sup> There are many examples of the assumed “we” within the emails of MoveOn.

Cheney’s final identification technique is identification through antithesis. Members are urged to unite against a common enemy. This relates to the second dimension of polarization rhetoric, opposing a common foe. According to Cheney, an explicit dissociation from one target implies association with another.<sup>48</sup> This is related to the goal of polarization rhetoric, which encourages individuals make a choice between one of the two competing groups. In the case of MoveOn, others may be labeled as “unprogressive”. The emphasis is on stressing identification with “insiders” as an effort toward achieving unity and collective acceptance of organizational values.<sup>49</sup>

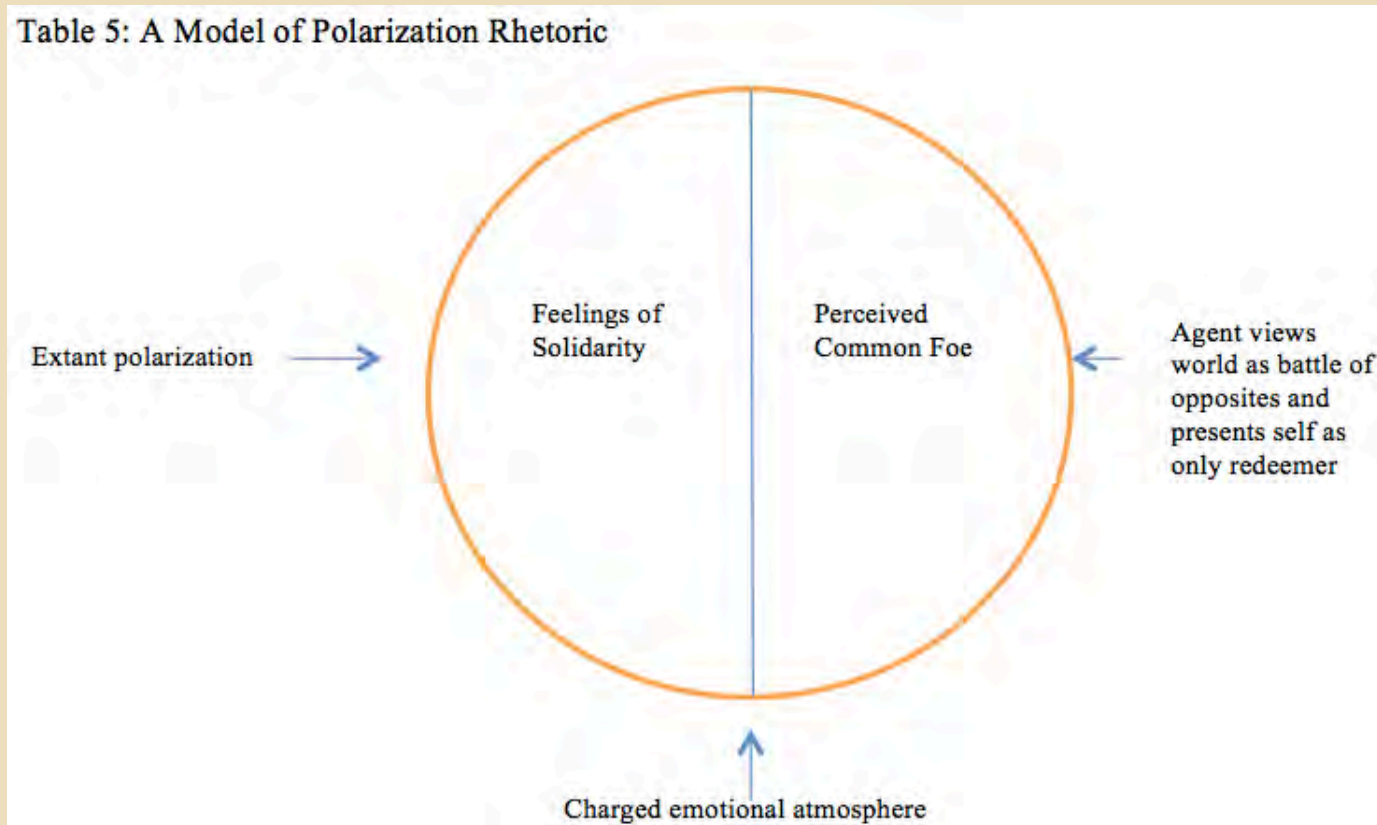
The identification by antithesis is dissociative because it urges members to unite against a common enemy. The identification through antithesis technique can be useful in not only creating solidarity, but also in creating a common foe within polarization rhetoric.

**Table 4: Rhetoric of Identification (Cheney)**

Technique	Definition	Tactics
1. Common Ground	The rhetor equates of links himself or herself with others in an overt manner.	Organization shares values and goals and offers an identity
		Expression of concern for the individual
		Recognition of individual contributions
		Espousal of shared values
		Advocacy of benefits and activities
		Praise by outsiders
		Testimonials by employees
2. Identification through antithesis	The act of uniting against a common enemy.	Emphasize threats from outsiders and stress identification with insiders as an effort to achieve unity.
3. The assumed or transcendent “we”	Use of the pronoun “we” often goes unnoticed as an appeal to identification between parties who may have little in common.	Uses of the assumed “we” and the corresponding “they” (symbolizing outsiders) can be found when the sharing of interests by parties seems taken for granted.

This paper expands King and Anderson's original conceptual framework of the rhetoric of polarization to include Raum and Measell's environmental characteristics.. It also incorporates Cheney's rhetoric of identification techniques and tactics. A visual depiction of the model of polarization rhetoric introduced in this paper is in Table 5. According to this model, feelings of solidarity and perceived common foe can be created by the King and Anderson tactics described above, and the Cheney tactics. However, these can only work when the three environmental factors of extant polarization, a charged emotional atmosphere and an agent that views the world as a battle of opposites and presents themselves as the only redeemer are present.

Table 5: A Model of Polarization Rhetoric



## Analysis of MoveOn E-mails

According to the model of polarization rhetoric presented in this study, creating solidarity and the perception of a common foe are key, but the environment must be right to be effective. Since the right environment is essential for effective polarization rhetoric, this analysis will begin with an examination of the context in which MoveOn's emails were sent. Next, the tactics used within MoveOn's emails to create solidarity and those used to create the perception of a common foe will be discussed.



## The Environment Surrounding MoveOn's Appeals

As the model indicates, environmental factors must be taken into consideration when examining polarization rhetoric. In the case of MoveOn, during the timeframe of this study, potential MoveOn members were indeed feeling a sense of extant polarization with conservatives, which existed in a highly emotionally charged environment because of the ongoing war in Iraq and the threat of war with Iran. In addition, many progressives believed that there were evil forces that they needed to fight.

In late 2007, as the war in Iraq continued with no end in sight, the opposition to it continued to grow. On June 26, 2007 CNN Senior Political Analyst Bill Schneider reported that:

*"Public support for the war in Iraq has fallen to a new low. Not only that, but Republican support is beginning to waver...Thirty percent of Americans polled say they favor the war, the lowest level of support on record. Two-thirds are opposed...Moreover, 63 percent of Americans are ready to withdraw at least some troops from Iraq. Fifty-four percent of Americans do not believe U.S. action in Iraq is morally justified... Among Democrats polled over the last four months, opposition to the war has remained nearly unanimous -- more than 90 percent opposed. About two-thirds of independents have also held steady against the war."*<sup>50</sup>



As has been previously discussed, membership in MoveOn significantly increased after 9/11 as thousands of antiwar activists joined. Membership continued to grow after the war began and continued in its fifth year at the time of this study. As it was revealed that there were no weapons of mass destruction, many came to believe that the administration intentionally exaggerated the threat, and this contributed to the emotionally charged environment. The fear that the administration was also planning to go to war with Iraq added to this environment and this belief is reflected in some of the emails sent to members during this time period. For example, an email sent on December 3, 2007 emphasized the commonality of beliefs among group members by stating, "If you're like us, you've been trying to block out the drumbeats of war coming from the Bush Administration. After all, Iraq is such a mess that it's hard to even imagine the disastrous results if they go through with their plans to attack Iran." The belief that the administration had hyped the evidence to justify going to war with Iraq angered people and only added to the sense of polarization with conservatives felt by many.



Because there was a sense that the administration, and President Bush in particular, could not be trusted, MoveOn framed the administration and President Bush as evil forces that needed to be fought. As previously mentioned, Pariser and the thousands of antiwar

activists that joined MoveOn when he took on a leadership role were determined to stop Bush. The criticism of Bush and the attempt to frame him as an enemy that must be fought can be found in an email that came on December 4, 2007 with the subject line “Bombshell on Iran.” In this email it is revealed that Bush had misled the public about Iran and MoveOn attempts to frame the President as a liar and someone not to be trusted. The email states:

*“All year President Bush has been moving America closer to war with Iran. But yesterday we learned stunning news: Iran shut down its nuclear weapons program in 2003- and President Bush has known for months. But Bush is undeterred. This morning, he held a news conference where he actually tried to portray the news that Iran isn’t building a bomb as yet another reason to confront Iran! He also said he hadn’t known about the new evidence- a fact contradicted by his own National Security Adviser. **It’s Iraq all over again. Bush is willing to ignore intelligence and lie to move us towards war [emphasis in original].”***

The email further criticizes Bush by stating, “President Bush got the world’s attention this fall when he warned that a nuclear-armed Iran might lead to World War III. But his stark warning came at least a month or two after he had first been told about fresh indications that Iran had actually halted its nuclear weapons program.”

The methods that MoveOn uses to recruit members are designed to acquire members who already feel a sense of extant polarization with conservatives. The war in Iraq and the threat of war with Iran created an environment that was emotionally charged and contributed to the polarization. MoveOn believed that President Bush and his administration were the evil forces that they had to oppose and fight. Finally, MoveOn presented itself as the only redeemer. Emphasizing the importance of membership, working together and the importance of each individual’s contribution to the organization, MoveOn positioned itself as a collective of members with shared values was presented as the redeemer. One of the goals of MoveOn was to persuade those who already felt a sense of polarization with conservatives that they should identify themselves as members of MoveOn. This was done by creating a sense of solidarity and will be discussed in the next section.

## Creating Feelings of Solidarity

One of the key dimensions of polarization is a powerful feeling of solidarity. In other words, strong group cohesiveness or collective identification is necessary if polarizing rhetoric is to function. The strategy of affirmation involves selecting images that will promote a strong sense of group identity. This strategy may be accomplished through tactics such as self-justifying images or any of Cheney’s identification appeals, including the common ground, identification through antithesis and the assumed or transcendent “we.” This section will examine these affirmation tactics in MoveOn’s e-mails.



### The Self-Justifying Image

The strategy of affirmation is concerned with creating solidarity or a strong sense of group identity. One rhetorical tactic that can be used to accomplish this is the concept of the self-justifying image. The self-justifying image implies a false symbolic depiction of a situation which, by the

very nature of the behavior it evokes, makes the originally false conception come true, at least in its consequences.<sup>51</sup> For example, in the political sphere, to provide a man who has felt isolated and powerless with a larger ready-made group identity (e.g. as a member of “the Great Silent Majority”) is to prompt self-protective responses that will make the identity a reality.<sup>52</sup> This concept is illustrated in the following comments by a MoveOn member, Helen. She accepts the reality created by MoveOn through its images in its emails and adopts the identity of a member of MoveOn. Her actions as part of the collective reinforce her identity and that reality.

*Helen S., a MoveOn member for Arizona, is quoted as saying, “I used to think my signature or call didn’t matter. But then I got an email from MoveOn and I learned I can make a difference. MoveOn makes democracy work.”<sup>53</sup>*

As King and Anderson illustrated in their study, Nixon called the “Silent Majority” into being by providing the needed symbolic images.<sup>54</sup> His use of the phrase generated the illusory consciousness of a common identity among many traditionally hostile groups.<sup>55</sup> Nixon’s focus was on their commonalities rather than on their differences to create a group identity. In the case of MoveOn the group identity that has been created has been as Progressives.

By identifying themselves as progressives, the emails positioned the group and its members on issues and clearly identified who was or was not part of the group. An email sent on November 20, 2007 addressed this issue. It stated, “It’s time to tell America what we stand for, not just what we stand against- to explain why progressive solutions are the right ones for the big issues we face at home and abroad... Check out these great new TV ads about what it means to be a progressive. Vote for your favorite, then contribute to get them on the air during the holidays.” The email and the ads clearly delineated who the members of the organization were, “the progressives.”



The email goes on to state that, “If we help define our progressive values now, more people will realize they’re progressives, too.” This illustrates King and Anderson’s concept that the practitioner of a rhetoric of polarization may not view uncommitted persons as neutral, but as either potential converts or foes.<sup>56</sup> By defining themselves in their emails and ads, MoveOn helped people realize they are progressives too, and part of the group. MoveOn persuades potential members to accept the collective identity. Common ground and a sense of group identity were created through the emphasis on the commonality of values and beliefs among the group members as well as by the emphasis on who was not a member. The emails stressed identification with organizational members as a way of creating unity and a collective acceptance of MoveOn’s values. The goal of the rhetoric in the emails to its members was to coalesce a diversified public into accepting the self-justifying image as progressives

and members of MoveOn. The use of the label Progressive by MoveOn generated the illusory consciousness of a common identity among many traditionally different and/or competing groups. In creating a group identity or feeling of solidarity, the focus was on their commonalities rather than on their differences. The MoveOn e-mails also employed various common ground tactics to create affirmation.



## Common Ground Tactics

Through the common ground technique the rhetor equates or links himself or herself with others in an overt manner. Of the six tactic categories identified by Cheney within the common ground technique, four are commonly found within the emails of MoveOn.<sup>57</sup>

The first is the expression of concern for the individual. This tactic involves stressing the importance of the people who belong to the organization rather than the organization itself and is illustrated in the previous discussion of the self-justifying image. One of the main ways that MoveOn created a collective identity or feeling of solidarity is by using the term ‘members’ rather than supporters, despite the fact that there is no fixed annual membership fee. An email sent December 28, 2007 stated that, “MoveOn is its members. MoveOn’s strength, creativity, tenacity- they all come from the millions of us working together all across the country.” This statement stresses the contributions that individual members make and the importance of everyone working together in the activities of the organization and affirms the importance of individual members to the organization.

Most of the emails are addressed to “Dear MoveOn member” but some of them do address the individual member by name. An email sent on December 14, 2007 provides further evidence of the importance of membership. It states, “MoveOn has grown tremendously over the last several years and none of that growth would have been possible without your energy and support. From the war in Iraq to President Bush’s plan to privatize Social Security, we have worked together to make sure that our voices are heard on the issues that matter most.” Recognizing individual contributions and the importance of working together is highlighted in this email.

The second tactic is the recognition of individual contributions. This is similar to the first tactic but is more focused on recognizing individuals for their contributions to the organization. One of the best examples of the recognition of individual contributions is in an email sent December 21, 2007 with the subject line “Thank You.” This email was sent the day after an email was sent requesting members to donate \$15 to help “the USO provide thousands of phone cards to servicemen and women stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world, so that they can call their friends, family and loved ones this holiday season.” In the thank you email it states:

*“It’s amazing-in less than 24 hours, MoveOn members like you have given over \$250,000 to help our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world call home. Men and women who are separated from their families this holiday season will be a little closer thanks to your generosity. This is just another reminder of the amazing things this good-hearted community can do when we all work together. What a wonderful way to close the year! Thanks for giving us inspiration, and, of course, for all you do.”*

The most commonly used tactic was the espousal of shared values where the emphasis is on explicitly stating the commonality of values and beliefs. Shared values are implied when discussing that “our voices are heard on the issues that matter most.” An emphasis on common beliefs and values is also found in emails that discuss “our progressive values” or state “If you’re like us, you’ve been trying to block out the drumbeats of war.” Shared values and beliefs are also evident in the December 20, 2007 email that states, “MoveOn



members are committed to seeing our troops come home as quickly as possible, and we'll keep working to make that happen." Another example is provided in an email sent December 19, 2007 in response to the loosening of media ownership rules: "For those of us who don't want a few big companies deciding what we see, hear and read in the news, it's a bad day." Shared values are explicitly stated in the emails, and the selection of topics addressed in the emails also imply a sense of shared values and beliefs. For example, other shared values espoused by the emails include anti-war activism, pro-children's health care and an antipathy toward Bush and his policies.

Finally, the tactic of the advocacy of benefits is evident in the MoveOn emails, wherein MoveOn presents membership in the organization as a value in itself. MoveOn emphasizes the accomplishments of the various collective actions of its members, thereby suggesting that membership leads to positive results. This is illustrated in an email sent December 28, 2007 highlighting the accomplishments of the organization over the past year. This email states:

*"MoveOn is its members. MoveOn's strength, creativity, tenacity-they all come from the millions of us working together all across the country...2007 saw significant victories- and a war we couldn't end. 2008 holds enormous opportunities. And the key to victory will be millions of progressives, standing together. Thank you for being part of this amazing community. And thank you for everything you did this year, big and small, to make America great."*

As members of MoveOn, people can make a difference and accomplish significant victories. These victories were accomplished through the coordination provided by MoveOn. Soliciting donations from members, asking members to sign petitions, call their local representatives or attend rallies are the various means MoveOn uses to accomplish its goals, and accomplishing progressive goals is the most significant benefit that MoveOn offers its members. By highlighting the importance of people, recognizing individual contributions, citing shared values, and touting the benefits of membership, MoveOn, works to create solidarity, identification, unity, and feelings of group identity among its members.

## The Assumed "we"

The emails also made use of the assumed "we" technique to create a common identity and sense of solidarity. Examples of this tactic from the emails include, "what we stand for", "we need to do something" and "we can find a way." It is also evidenced in many of the emails previously discussed. For example, "a war we couldn't end," "we'll keep working to make that happen," "we have worked together to make sure that our voices are heard." Use of this phrasing expresses a sharing of interests that seems taken for granted. It is assumed that all of the members of MoveOn share the perspective of the writer of the email. In other words, all of the members identify with the group and share the beliefs, values and goals of the organization. Through the use of terms like 'we' and 'members' these emails imply a powerful feeling of solidarity. There is a strong sense of group cohesiveness and unity. The emails also reinforce the value of membership. The assumed "we" technique is a useful tool in creating solidarity as part



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of the strategy of affirmation.

Through the strategy of affirmation and the use of the techniques for identification in its emails, MoveOn has been able to create a powerful feeling of solidarity among its members. This sense of solidarity is a key dimension of polarization. Evidence of the strategy of affirmation which involves the selection of images that will promote a strong sense of group identity can be found in the use of the self-justifying image. Additionally, the use of the identification techniques of common ground and the assumed “we” also contributed to the strategy of affirmation and the creation of a strong feeling of solidarity.

## Creating a Common Foe

The strategy of affirmation alone is not enough to hold the loyalty of the group members and to mobilize them into action. Identification of a common foe through the strategy of subversion is also essential when using polarization rhetoric. Both strategies are always present in varying degrees when the rhetoric of polarization is used. A strategy of subversion is implicit when a communicator’s motive is to weaken or destroy the credibility of a concept.<sup>58</sup> Cheney refers to this act of uniting against a common enemy as identification through antithesis. King and Anderson discussed how Nixon consolidated his constituency as the “silent majority” and united them on the basis of a common enemy using a rhetoric of polarization to intensify the real differences that already divided the American people.<sup>59</sup> Much like Nixon did, MoveOn has consolidated their members as “progressives”, who united on the basis of a common enemy. In general this enemy was the non-progressives. This is evidenced in an email sent January 11, 2008 with the subject heading “Democrats are accountable too.” In this email it states, “They’re the problem. Democrats in Congress who vote with President Bush on the war. Who take checks from lobbyists. Who side with corporations instead of voters. It’s not enough to fight Republicans-**progressives need to make sure the Democrats we elect are on our side too.**” The email goes on to ask the member to make a contribution to support the campaign of “a new progressive champion, Donna Edwards.” This email makes it clear that progressives must unite against those who don’t support them, the non-progressives.



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As has been discussed exploitation of fears and prejudices of the group is an important tactic of the strategy of subversion. Another important tactic as previously mentioned is to weaken or destroy the credibility of a concept. Presenting a situation or a foe a certain way, the rhetor creates a particular reality which the group members are able to accept and act upon. In other words, through the careful selection of images the rhetor is able to undermine the ethos of competing groups, ideologies, or institutions and create a reality.



By destroying the credibility of concepts and exploiting fears and prejudices, MoveOn is creating a polarized reality: you are either with them or against them. According to Raum and Measell an agent of polarization views the world as a battle of opposites. “This world view results in frequent employment of copula tactics, including the drawing of artificial dichotomies and we/they distinctions. These philosophical judgments about ‘reality’ and the opposition are perhaps the most important characteristics of the rhetoric of polarization, for they belie the thought processes of those who seek to polarize and are increasingly polarized by others.”<sup>60</sup> The rhetoric of polarization contained in the emails sent by MoveOn illustrates the view of the world as a battle of opposites. A simplistic reality is created in which the dichotomy of progressive versus non-progressive dominates and a common foe exists. As a result members base their actions on the reality created in the emails that they have accepted.

MoveOn uses its emails to create reality and identify the “common foe which the group must oppose if it is to preserve the fabric of beliefs out of which the persuader has woven its identity.”<sup>61</sup> During the time period of this study the main representative of non-progressives and the common enemy of MoveOn members was President Bush and his administration. With an anti-war theme and an anti-Bush theme running throughout many of the emails MoveOn adopted a strategy of subversion and attempted to weaken or destroy President Bush and his administration’s credibility.

## Weaken or Destroy Credibility

Employing the strategy of subversion, many of the emails attempted to weaken or destroy the credibility of President Bush and his administration. The emails illustrated how President Bush was seen as the common enemy of members of MoveOn. A majority of the emails also created reality by containing substantive information about issues that suggested members should adopt a particular view. An example of this is provided in the collection of emails that were sent out regarding the issue of President Bush and the threat of war with Iran. An email with the subject line “Hope is not a method” sent on October 24, 2007 addressed the threat of war with Iran poised by Bush. The email states:

*“To be honest, I don’t even like to think about the possibility of war with Iran. But here’s the unfortunate truth-plans for an aerial attack have been drawn up. There’s nothing stopping Bush from launching that attack any day. And right now the progressive movement’s main strategy for preventing it is simply to hope that it doesn’t happen. To paraphrase my ninth-grade sex-ed teacher ‘Hope is not a method.’ We need to do something. There are increasing indications that war with Iran may be imminent. And experts agree it would be catastrophe. So today **we’re proposing a major campaign to expose the danger of a new war in Iran.**”*

The email then goes on to request that the member contribute \$25 for the campaign. This email clearly suggests that the member adopt the view of war with Iran as being a real threat because of President Bush. Bush’s credibility is weakened because his plans for a war in Iran are labeled as dangerous and experts agree that it would be a



catastrophe. MoveOn has created an image of Bush as ignoring the experts and being ready to launch an attack any day with nothing stopping him.

The threat of war with Iran because of President Bush is further developed in an email sent on December 3, 2007 with the subject line “Another reckless war.” In this quote, MoveOn applied the term “reckless” to Bush. Other negative labels of President Bush found within the emails include “screw-up”, “liar”, “misguided”, “misleading”, and “illegal.” MoveOn also labels Bush’s policies negatively by referring to them as “disastrous”, “dangerous”, “a catastrophe”, “misguided” and “risky.” An example of the negative labeling of President Bush and his policies can be found in the December 3, 2007 email that asked the member to sign a petition that states, “Americans don’t want another disastrous war in Iran. Congress must act now and make it clear that President Bush has no authority to strike in Iran.” The email argues:

*“The consequences of a reckless war with Iran are so grave that a group of retired military officers wrote to the Administration earlier this year: ‘As former US military leaders, we strongly caution against the use of military force against Iran. An attack on Iran would have disastrous consequences for security in the region, coalition forces in Iraq and would further exacerbate regional and global tensions. The current crisis must be resolved through diplomacy.’ Despite the warnings, Bush and his team have continued to escalate the tension in Iran. Last spring, Bush labeled the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization- a title he believes clears the way for military strikes. And Vice President Cheney started urging Bush to send the military in as early as this summer. We’ve got to get our next steps right, or we’ll be living through Iraq all over again. We know how that turned out. And our troops are the ones paying the price for Bush’s misguided mission. We can find a way to solve the stand-off with Iran-but not if this president screws up again.”*

**This email is very critical of Bush as the foe to the group and attempts to educate the members so to undermine the President and his administration. The emphasis is on subverting Bush through calling him reckless, misguided and a screw up. The goal is to create an association between the threat of war with Iraq presented by Bush and the problems of the decisions made related to the on-going war in Iraq. The assumed “we” is also present throughout this email to emphasize the commonality of beliefs of the members and the solidarity against President Bush.**



The criticism of Bush and the attempt to discredit him continues in an email that came the following day on December 4, 2007 with the subject line “Bombshell on Iran.” In this email it is revealed that Bush had mislead the public about Iran and MoveOn attempts to present the President as a liar and someone not to be trusted. The email states, “All year President Bush has been moving America closer to war with Iran. But yesterday we learned stunning news: Iran shut down its nuclear weapons program in 2003- and President Bush has known for months.” By exposing how President Bush had been “actively misleading us on Iran” this email effectively works to undermine the credibility of the President and his policy regarding Iran. MoveOn wanted its members to accept the anti-war position and the image of President Bush as a liar. These emails

provide evidence of MoveOn's attempt to weaken President Bush's credibility and they also illustrate the tactic of exploiting fears and prejudices surrounding the issue of war.

## Exploit Fears and Prejudices

The war in Iraq was highly unpopular among members of MoveOn and they were fearful of President Bush starting another war. By exposing President Bush's desire to drive us to war with Iran based on lies and false information, MoveOn played on the fears of its members that there would be a repeat of what happened with Iraq. The strongly held anti-war belief of MoveOn's members stood in stark opposition to President Bush and his plans for Iran. Therefore, it was easy for MoveOn to portray him as the common enemy who was not to be trusted.

Seeking to further exploit fears and expose President Bush and his lies regarding Iran, an email sent December 12, 2007 with the subject line "The cartoon Bush doesn't want you to see" asks members to make a donation to run an ad in the New York Times "urging Congress to stop Bush's march to war with Iran." The email states:



*"How did President Bush respond to the bombshell last week that Iran had stopped its nuclear program? Here's how one of his top military commanders put it: 'There has been no course correction.' For years, Bush and Cheney and Rove have governed using fear-talking up war and terrorism to win elections and push their agenda. They used this method to get us into war with Iraq, and now the President's at it again-trying to rally support by marching the nation toward war with Iran...We need to expose not just the President's lies but his political motivations behind them. To do that, we need the media to be asking tough questions...This time, the report's revelations about Iran's lack of nuclear weapons give us just the opening we need to expose their lies and force the media to question the motivation behind their march to war."*

This email, along with the others previously discussed, wanted the members to accept the anti-war position and the image of President Bush as a liar. Through the rhetoric of subversion contained in these emails, President Bush is portrayed as not credible and as a threat. The emails addressing war with Iran illustrate the tactic of exploiting fears and MoveOn's attempt to weaken President Bush's credibility.

Exploitation of fears and prejudices to weaken President Bush's credibility can also be found in the series of emails addressing illegal wiretapping. These emails tapped into fears about our democracy, our liberties and our justice system being undermined by the administration. An email sent October 23, 2007 with the subject line, "Stop Bush's Cover-Up" states:



*“President Bush is pressing the Senate to help him cover up his illegal wiretapping...For years the Bush administration has been illegally spying on Americans’ phone calls and emails with the willing assistance of big telecom companies like Verizon and AT&T. Lawsuits moving forward against these companies may be the only way we ever find out how far the Bush administration went in breaking the law. President Bush is threatening to veto an upcoming bill on wiretapping unless it gives lawbreaking corporations retroactive immunity...There is no trade-off between fundamental liberties and security.”*

**There is concern that citizen’s liberties would be infringed on and that illegal activity would be allowed without punishment. President Bush is presented as the enemy who has been involved in illegal activity, an attempt to cover it up and is a threat to our liberties through his actions. His credibility is called into question by exposing his illegal activities and favoritism for big business over citizens.**

**Criticisms of President Bush and his administration were not limited to the issue of war and illegal wiretapping. The use of the strategy of subversion can also be found in the emails about the emotionally charged issue of children’s health care. On October 3, 2007, members were notified that “President Bush just vetoed health care for children. In only his fourth veto ever, he blocked health care coverage for millions of uninsured- and mostly poor-kids... Bush is totally out of step with public opinion- even 61% of Republicans support the children’s health care bill. We need just 15 more Republicans in Congress to break with Bush to override the veto.” Members were then asked “put the pressure on at our emergency ‘Rally for Our Children’s Health Care’ in Rochester.” On October 17, 2007 another email about this introduced members to “Bethany, a 2-year-old girl born with a heart defect who’s only healthy today because of the SCHIP children’s health program.” In this email the member is not asked to attend a rally, but instead to donate money to help run an ad featuring Bethany “in the districts of representatives who vote wrong.” This issue also exploits fears and prejudices of the members in that there is a real fear that children will die without the help that this child health care bill can provide. To reinforce this the email about Bethany states:**



*“Only because of SCHIP is Bethany healthy today. With children’s lives hanging in the balance, this is a politically risky vote for Republicans...President Bush vetoed SCHIP because it’s such a successful public program- and the right-wing’s ideology is about running the government into the ground to keep it from serving the common good. But children’s health care has so much popular support that Bush’s supporters are paying a heavy political price for defending their failed ideology.”*

**Through the strategy of subversion this email exploits the fear that children would be left to die because of President Bush’s veto**

of children's health care. It also undermines President Bush's ideology and frames him as a heartless enemy willing to let children suffer and possibly die. These emails reinforce the collective identity of the group while attacking the President as the enemy and subverting his policies and actions.

Through the strategy of subversion in its emails, MoveOn framed President Bush as a common foe. Through a careful selection of images, MoveOn was able to undermine President Bush and his administration's ideologies. As evidenced in the examples provided, MoveOn exploited the fears and prejudices of its members and weakened the credibility of President Bush and his administration. Evidence of MoveOn's success in creating a reality that its members adopted is provided by the increase in membership and the numerous examples of members acting on this reality created by MoveOn by signing petitions, donating money and attending rallies and events.

## Conclusion

The success of MoveOn and the impact it has had on the political landscape demands attention. MoveOn has been able to steadily increase its membership over the years by providing concerned citizens with an outlet to become politically active. Key to MoveOn's success has been its ability to create a collective identity by consolidating its members as "progressives" (affirmation) while at the same time uniting against and targeting political enemies and initiating action (subversion).

As this analysis has shown, MoveOn has been able to accomplish this through the use of the rhetoric of polarization. This study has created a useful model of polarization rhetoric by combining the work of King and Anderson, Raum and Measall and Cheney. Creating and applying an expanded model of the rhetoric of polarization, this research provides a conceptualization of the polarization rhetoric that previously didn't exist. The model presented in this paper is based on creating feelings of solidarity as well as creating the perception of a common foe. Feelings of solidarity can be created by using strategies of affirmation such as the self-justifying image. This study expands the tactics that can be used to create feelings of solidarity to include identification techniques such as common ground tactics and the assumed "we." Creating the perception of a common foe can be accomplished through the subversion strategies of weakening or destroying credibility and exploiting fear and prejudices. However, to be effective, this model acknowledges the importance of the environment in which the rhetoric is being used. Polarization rhetoric is most effective when there is a charged emotional environment, extant polarization exists and the agent views the world as a battle of opposites and presents themselves as the only redeemer. Acknowledging the importance of all of these elements, this expanded model provides a more complete conceptualization of the rhetoric of polarization. Through the application of this expanded model, this research



has shown how MoveOn has succeeded by deploying the rhetoric of polarization.

However, it should be noted that MoveOn didn't create this polarization between its members and Bush and other non-progressives. As the model indicates, the environment is an important element to consider when examining the rhetoric of polarization. As Raum and Measell argue, polarization is a process and the speaker cannot create polarization where none existed before.<sup>62</sup> Extant polarization is present. This was the case with MoveOn. In their email messages they tapped into divisions that already existed in society such as the anti-war and the anti-republican/administration sentiments. Through its efforts MoveOn united citizens who were already dissatisfied with the government.



As the model indicates, another important element of the environment to be considered is the charged emotional atmosphere of the environment. As Raum and Measell argued, polarization is often accompanied by and preceded by a highly charged emotional atmosphere.<sup>63</sup> It is also worth noting that a significant increase in membership in MoveOn occurred as a result of the war in Iraq. War creates a highly charged emotional atmosphere. This was especially true as it was discovered that the war with Iraq was started under false pretenses and there seemed to be no end to the war in site. Further contributing to the highly charged emotional environment was the perceived threat of President Bush leading the country into war with Iran. As the emails from MoveOn indicate, this was something that was feared by the members. Many of the emails from MoveOn addressed emotionally charged issues.

The final environmental aspect of the model of polarization rhetoric presented in this study is that the agents view the world as a battle of opposites and present themselves as the only redeemer. In the case of MoveOn, there very much is a belief in a battle of opposites in which the progressives must battle the non-progressives. During the time period of this study, President Bush was the common foe who epitomized the other side. Although President Bush is no longer the main foe of MoveOn, it continues to be a force within politics. The enemy has shifted from the more specific target of President Bush to the more general dichotomy of “we” and “they”, insiders versus outsiders, and progressives versus non-progressives. In terms of the agents presenting themselves as the only redeemer, this was not exactly the case with MoveOn. The group is seen as a collective with no one leader as the redeemer. The power of MoveOn lies in its ability to empower the individual through membership in the group. The emails contain recognition of individual contributions and advocate for activities in which members work together to achieve their goals. Therefore, in the case of MoveOn, the organization with its collective of members is the redeemer not any individual member.



With the environment right this study has shown how MoveOn's polarization rhetoric worked effectively. Through the strategy of affirmation images were selected by





MoveOn that would promote a strong sense of group identity. MoveOn persuaded potential members and members to accept the identity of being Progressives. This was accomplished through use of the self-justifying image. Use of the organizational identification techniques also contributed to MoveOn creating a collective identity and a feeling of solidarity among its members. Additionally, the techniques of the assumed “we” and identification through antithesis are found within the emails. As a key dimension of the rhetoric of polarization, creating a feeling of solidarity is essential. This was accomplished by MoveOn utilizing a strategy of affirmation which included using the self-justifying image, common ground tactics and the assumed “we.” In addition to creating a sense of solidarity, the rhetoric of polarization depends on identifying a common foe. Through the strategy of subversion images are selected that will undermine the ethos of competing groups, ideologies or institutions. MoveOn used the strategy of subversion to undermine its enemy, who for the time period of this study was President Bush and his administration. However, anyone who was viewed as a non progressive was subject to criticism and was considered to be on the enemy’s side. A key tactic in subverting the enemy is to weaken or destroy their credibility. This can be done by creating a reality through the selection of images. Another tactic is to exploit fears and prejudices. MoveOn’s emails contained substantial information on topics in an attempt to persuade their members to adopt their version of reality. In the case of the emails that criticized President Bush for illegal wiretapping, threatening war with Iran and vetoing children’s health care fears of the members

were exploited. Subversion of President Bush and his administration included calling him reckless, a screw up, a liar, a criminal as well as calling him out of touch with Americans. Members expected to adopt MoveOn’s version of reality, MoveOn expected the members to act on that reality as well. The success at initiating action is reflected in the number of members who signed petitions, donated money and participated in rallies and events.

MoveOn continues to remain strong in numbers and influence because the political environment is still very polarized around a number of key issues including war. The rhetoric of polarization used by MoveOn in its emails created and reinforced a collective identity for its members and provided them with a common enemy upon who they could act against. Previously powerless feeling citizens were given the opportunity to be politically involved and to make a difference through their membership in MoveOn. Whether signing an on-line petition, donating money or attending a rally, members of MoveOn were moved to action by the reality created in the emails they received from the organization.



MoveOn has been successful not just because of its use of the rhetoric of polarization, but also because it coupled that with a means of action for its members. The on-line interactive media environment in which MoveOn operates allows it to communicate with its members by getting their message out and also to mobilize members quickly. Members can be moved to action by simply signing an on-line petition, making a donation by clicking a button, clicking a button to RSVP for an event or forwarding an email message to a friend. It may be possible that the online environment further takes advantage of the charged emotional atmosphere because it allows participants to act on their immediate emotional responses. The formula of using the rhetoric of polarization in its emails to members along with providing a means for action through on-line activities has equaled success for MoveOn.

Since the media landscape is rapidly changing, future studies of the rhetoric of polarization should examine the role that on-line media play. Future research could focus on how and why the rhetoric of polarization is able to motivate the audience into taking action and the role that interactive media play.

## Notes

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<sup>47</sup> George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and The Study of Organizational Communication," 154.

<sup>48</sup> George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and The Study of Organizational Communication," 153.

<sup>49</sup> George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and The Study of Organizational Communication," 148.

<sup>50</sup> Bill Schneider, "Poll: GOP support for Iraq war beginning to waver" June 26, 2007, [http://articles.cnn.com/2007-06-26/politics/poll.iraq.schneider\\_1\\_gradual-military-disengagement-support-for-iraq-war-iraq-policy?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2007-06-26/politics/poll.iraq.schneider_1_gradual-military-disengagement-support-for-iraq-war-iraq-policy?_s=PM:POLITICS)

<sup>51</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," 246.

<sup>52</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," 246.

<sup>53</sup> [http:// www.moveon.org/about.html](http://www.moveon.org/about.html)

- <sup>54</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."
- <sup>55</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," 247.
- <sup>56</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."
- <sup>57</sup> George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and The Study of Organizational Communication."
- <sup>58</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," 245.
- <sup>59</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."
- <sup>60</sup> Raum and Measell, "Wallace and His Ways: A Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."
- <sup>61</sup> King and Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," 244.
- <sup>62</sup> Raum and Measell, "Wallace and His Ways: A Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."
- <sup>63</sup> Raum and Measell, "Wallace and His Ways: A Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization."