

# ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Empowering Activism: Hortatory Arguments In On-line Environmental Networks



## *Abstract*

Calls to action in environmental on-line networks reveal hortatory persuasion tactics used in new media discourse. Arguments of empowerment found in such electronically linked communities as environmental news digests, and email listservs of environmentalist groups, invoke a proactive audience. Hortatory elements of argument distinguish communication aimed at persuasion of beliefs and attitudes from arguments that are calls to action. Environmentalist discourse of on-line networks emphasizes the urgency of environmental crises, by placing blame and responsibility on humanity. Particularly in an era of civil society connected by global networks, hortatory arguments are crucial rhetorical devices for effective environmental social movements.

Globalization has pervaded the human experience. Indeed, in this media saturated world, it is difficult to ignore the interconnectedness of global events, ideas and cultures. As economic integration and political transformation influence international relations, individuals are responding to globalization through their own activities. "The study of argumentation is experiencing – and in turn reflects – many senses of the globalization concept.... The globalization of communication, and particularly of the Internet, has made questions about the influence of culture perhaps even more important than is usually recognized" (Klumpp, Hollihan, and Riley, 2001). A civil society is emerging as individuals identify and actualize common bonds, forming coalitions across traditional state and institutional boundaries (Wapner, 1998). One of the ways this is happening is through the creation of networks based on information and communication technologies (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Some of the most prolific of these communication networks are environmental advocacy networks. The argumentation strategies of groups who communicate their positions on these networks are unique because they

exhibit qualities of hortatory rather than simply descriptive discourse. These networks are distinct from informational or traditional news sources because they present environmental news as calls to action. This paper is a case study of several environmental news digests and email listservs of environmental groups and explores what the arguments of these networks tell us about how globalization is changing argumentation practices. I am interested in what the hortatory arguments of environmental on-line networks reveal about how technology affects the intent and purpose of arguers.

From the Latin, *hortari*, to encourage, exhortation can be broadly described as “the use of rhetorical means to encourage ongoing moral reformation or, more immediately, to encourage morally significant action on the basis of common experience, conviction or hope” (Avram, 2001, p. 279). Marked by strong urging, encouraging or inciting, hortatory discourse attempts to persuade the addressee to do something or to act in a certain way – to fulfill commands given by the arguer. In this way, exhortation is different than mere persuasion, which is rhetoric used to simply convince an audience of some truth (See Herrick, 1998). As a goal of argument, action is significant because it requires more of a commitment than simply changing beliefs; it induces people to demonstrate – publicly and visibly – their commitment. Hortatory arguments ask their audiences to act on their convictions, rather than just attesting to them. This takes resources: effort, energy, money and time, all of which present obstacles in persuading people toward action.

Black (1965) addresses exhortation, which he describes as that discourse in which the “stirring of an audience’s emotions is a primary persuasive force” (1965, 142). Action is prompted by strong emotional impetus. “The power of exhortation lies, first, in its capacity for evoking intense emotion, and second, in its capacity of legitimatizing the emotional experience with appropriate convictions” (Black, 1965, 45). The dual nature of hortatory persuasion illustrates Aristotle’s notions of ethos and pathos. The elements of the hortatory arguments of these environmental networks are distinct, yet they are interrelated as the convictions based on ethos and the emotional obligation of pathos are warrants for each other.

While the explicit treatment of exhortative discourse is sparse in contemporary argumentation theory, all arguments may be in some ways hortatory[i]. Burke describes rhetoric as symbolic action (1966). Symbols have meaning within

context of audiences' experience and Burke (1950) notes that "the basic function of rhetoric, [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (41). So, in that rhetoric is persuasive, it is hortatory. Some would argue that all language or persuasive rhetoric is hortatory. Even in the act of naming, we are urging, and giving reason or compelling to action. Rhetoric forms and induces – this is its call to action. Burke distinguishes descriptive rhetoric from hortatory rhetoric, noting that the latter "is not just trying to tell how things are, in strictly 'scenic' terms; it is trying to *move* people" (1950, 41). He conceives of language and thought as "modes of action rather than as a means of conveying information" (1950, 41). Burke argues that rhetoric is an action imbued with "consciousness or purpose" (1945,14) and capable of bringing something and someone to actuality (1966, 52-54). What Burke tells us about the hortatory nature of argument is that such rhetoric provides motives for action. In this case, the motives are the environmental problems that warrant attention – and action.

The study of environmental rhetoric has been growing since the early 1990s (Waddell, 1998, xi). A brief survey of this literature reveals that while not explicitly named as such, environmental rhetoric is often hortatory. This case study analyzes hortatory arguments in environmental on-line networks from two environmental email listservs, and on-line news digests. There are hundreds of such lists and news sources. I chose the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) based on the size of their subscriber base, and on the hortatory nature of their arguments. Both groups have astounding success at attracting members. "Between 1985 and 1990 membership in the Environmental Defense Fund doubled, then doubled again between 1990 and 1991. The Natural Resources Defense Council grew 2.7 times between 1985 and 1990" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, 128). "The Natural Resources Defense Council is a non-profit environmental organization with 500,000 members nationwide and a staff of scientists, lawyers and environmental experts (Legislative Watch, 30 May, 2002)[ii]. Their mission is to "protect the world's natural resources and improve the quality of the human environment" (NRDC, 18 February, 1999). Environmental Defense has over 300,000 members nationwide (EDFNEWS, 1999) and describes itself as "a remarkable and unique nonprofit organization. Guided by science, we work to create practical solutions. These solutions win lasting political and economic support. Why? Because they are nonpartisan, cost effective and fair. We are dedicated to protecting the

environmental rights of all people” (EDFNEWS, 13 December 2000). Both NRDC and EDF take litigation and regulatory negotiation approaches (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, 128) and in doing so make arguments about why people should participate in democratic discourse. These exhortative approaches reveal how globalization is changing the democratic nature of argumentation.

I studied two of National Research Defense Council’s four email bulletin listservs from February 1999-June 2002 – Earth Action and Legislative Watch. Earth Action is “the bulletin for environmental activists” published on-line by the NRDC approximately every two weeks and “calls out urgent environmental issues requiring grassroots action” (NRDC, 18 February, 1999). Legislative Watch is a similar on-line digest, but focuses on legislative actions that concern environmental activists. “Legislative Watch is sent biweekly when Congress is in session and tracks environmental bills moving through the federal legislature” (NRDC, 22 February, 2001). Environmental Defense Fund offers a news digest[iii], which I also observed from February 1999 – June 2002. EDF Dispatch is EDF’s environmental news digest that is published every week and generally has links to other websites for readers to learn more about these topics. From these three listservs, I performed a rhetorical analysis drawing from a sample of 600 messages. Many of these had narratives or news in the content of the message, others direct readers to websites for full stories. While very different issues were covered, several hortatory themes emerged which are significant for the study of environmental communication, and technologically-linked activist networks. First, I explore the use of ethos to establish credence for the claims of the specific aspects of the environmental crisis. Second, I explore the use of pathos to turn emotional appeals into reasons to act[iv]. Third, I discuss the notion of an active audience as conceptualized in the arguments of these environmental networks. I conclude by analyzing the implications for the hortatory arguments of environmental on-line networks on the state of democracy in an era of globalization.

### *Ethos: Concrete Description And Environmental Expertise*

Ethos is an Aristotelean concept[v] that refers to the “persuasive potential of the speaker’s character or credibility” (Herrick, 1998, 88). Ethos concerns the credibility of character that a speaker is knowledgeable, trustworthy and has the audience’s best interests at heart (Herrick, 1998, 88). In the case of environmental networks – this credibility concerns the existence of an

environmental crisis. "The first task of exhortation is, ironically, not suasive but didactic: the problem of being understood. Two attributes of the style of exhortation bear upon the matter of clarity. One of these attributes is the extensive use of concrete description; the other is the frequent substitution of is or will be for should or should be" (Black, 1965, 143). In this way, the ethos of environmental exhortation includes both the credibility of the shared vision of what should be (i.e. environmental sustainability), and concrete description of the environmental crisis as proof of the need for action. Thus, I analyze two primary qualities of ethos in the rhetoric of environmental on-line networks. First, NRDC and EDF establish their ethos as environmentalists. Second, the use of concrete description helps NRDC and EDF to assert their credibility as sources for environmental news.

The state of the environment is the subject of notable scientific debate. From global warming to water supply, environmental debates produce scientific evidence supporting all sides (See Porter and Brown, 1991 and Ray, 1993 e.g.). This is true of the numerous environmental issues presented by the EDF and NRDC, who use scientific evidence to help establish their credibility. This takes the form of studies or findings that establish the authority of NRDC and EDF as reliable sources on specific issues. Significantly, the audiences of these groups are *subscribers*, they sign up for these listservs to get information about environmental issues. In this way, the persuasive task of these environmental networks is nuanced because the audience is already convinced of the need to receive information about environmental causes and events. The NRDC and EDF have already established credibility for their audience because individuals turn to them for information about environmental issues. Thus NRDC and EDF work to spin their credibility as qualified sources for environmental news into reasons for their subscribers to take action on environmental issues.

One of the ways environmental networks establish their credibility is to frame their arguments with an ethos as environmentalists. The networks exemplify a self-defined community whose rhetoric relies on common values. Both communicators and audience members identify as environmentalists, and have a shared vision of ecological sustainability. "Exhortation takes a high stake in appeals from *ethos*, which may be built on the represented authority of a third person, a shared theological, philosophical, or social vision, common experience, or agreed on religious, military, political, or other purpose" (Avram, 2001, 280). NRDC and EDF have tapped into a segment of society based in environmental

action and thus already active audience[**vi**]. Thus the groups couch specific actions in broad, general values. The emails I studied use language that is appealing to those who share environmental beliefs and values. A social vision for a sustainable environment becomes a warrant for action toward a shared goal of establishing environmental protections.

NRDC and EDF take care to cultivate this notion of a community and its shared vision. Most emails encourage audiences to become more involved in various causes, and even become informed about the groups themselves. "Take a look at what we do: Curious to know exactly what the Environmental Defense Fund does with its 170-person staff and 300,000 members nationwide? A series of new pages on our website, entitled 'What We Do,' will make it easier for you to learn about your favorite environmental program and get involved" (EDFNEWS, 16 March 1999). Environmental activist networks strive to make it easy for audience members to get involved, by eliminating barriers to action such as time and energy. Furthermore, EDF and NRDC are careful to reference the qualifications of their 170 person staff as well as their active member base, thus establishing the audience as part of the organization's successful efforts for environmental protection. Phrases such as "get the facts," "consult the experts," and listen to an "authority on oceans" (EDFNEWS, 20 July 2000) are indicative of how these groups assert themselves as qualified sources on environmental issues, and their audience as powerful when armed with the information they provide. EDF and NRDC also publish progress reports to demonstrate their successful efforts to their audience. This works to encourage members to participate in these projects to contribute to the community's ongoing success. These groups point to how actions have worked, and situations have improved, thus establishing credibility of groups and their members as successful activists.

The second quality of hortatory ethos evident in environmental networks is the use of concrete description to establish the need for action. Concrete description is important to hortatory arguments in general because arguers must give their audiences a reason to act. It is also important to environmentalists who operate on the existence of a crisis, or a need to call attention to environmental causes. Such concrete description helps environmental groups establish their knowledge and trustworthiness to their audience regarding specific issues. "Concrete description, more readily grasped than abstractions would be, offers no hindrances to the understanding and, at the same time, serves to stimulate emotionally charged responses. The tone of prophecy gives a greater sense of

urgency to the exhortation than would the tone of advising or moralizing” (Black, 1965, 144). Descriptions of environmental crises provide proof of the need for action. “Hard numbers” or facts can help define the problem, and present motives for action by providing incontrovertible evidence that environmental destruction or injustice is happening. Verifiable proof, sometimes visual, can help clinch the need for action. Two examples point to different ways they do this: EDF’s feature regarding car pollution, and their satellite images of fires in the Brazilian Amazon.

“‘Tailpipe tally’ totes up your car’s pollution. Concerned about the environmental impact of your vehicle? This new interactive feature calculates the pounds of pollutants your make and model sends into the air each year” (EDFNEWS 10 August, 1999). A survey of tailpipe toxicity tests the amount of emissions a reader’s car produces. This provides people with the dirty facts of their driving habits – information urging EDF’s audience to change their behaviors by driving less, and thus lessen their personal environmental impact. Assigning quantifiable emission numbers to someone’s personal lifestyle can help them realize the impact of their actions and answers sentiments that one person cannot really make a difference. This motivates individuals by emphasizing the shared responsibility of pollution reduction. Environmental impacts become personal as each person, even if they do not take the test, becomes aware that they emit pounds of pollution each year by driving.

A second way that the networks use concrete description is with visual evidence of the environmental crisis. One vivid example of this is the satellite images of the burning Brazilian Amazon rainforest. “See the fires burning the Amazon rainforest. The average number of fires per day in the Amazon rainforest has been increasing dramatically since 1996. The scope of the burning is revealed in actual satellite images of sections of two Brazilian states taken last year” (EDFNEWS, 2 March 1999). By giving incontrovertible evidence that this environmental destruction is happening – it is harder for people in developed countries to ignore the plight of indigenous communities in developing countries that suffer at the expanse of development. Part of this environmentalist ethos involves the naming of the environmental crisis, that is naming specific practices or situations as environmental threats. By providing provocative visual images of the fires as evidence of this environmental threat, EDF vividly names the Amazon fires as part of the environmental crisis. This demonstrates the importance of concrete description for environmental networks. Hortatory arguments employ strong emotional appeals for action, provoking their audience with visual images to make

an environmental threat far removed from their own experience seem closer and more threatening.

### *Pathos: Temporal Urgency Of Health Harms And Species Extinction*

As described by Aristotle, pathos is “putting the audience in the right frame of mind” (Herrick, 1998, 86). It refers to “the affective or emotional appeals that give persuasive messages their power to move an audience to action” (Herrick, 1998, 87). Exhortative arguments indicate the “disposition of people to accept, sometimes even to seek, beliefs as a consequence of emotional experiences” (Black, 1965, 141). Environmental issues are fundamentally emotional to environmentalists whose frustration/sorrow/fear about the state of the Earth creates a belief in the need for action. “Exhortation is normally marked by an appeal to belief and action congruent with moral principles, social vision, or religious experience already *shared* by speaker and audience” (Avram, 2001, 279). Exhortation is therefore a call for “a moral turning” characterized by a “dynamic of preservation, perseverance, or return to good conscience” (Avram, 2001, 279). As discussed earlier, environmental exhortation is typically seeking to reinforce general notions of an environmental crisis with specific appeals of threats to humans and their environment. “Exhortation might be described metaphorically as persuasion aimed toward the heart and hands rather than the head and eyes. It is concerned with arousing a hearer’s emotional bond to shared knowledge and identifying that bond with recommended practice” (Avram, 2001, 279). In the case of environmental networks, both arguer and audience believe there is an environmental crisis, which means EDF and NRDC use pathos to get their audiences to mobilize around a particular issue. Environmental pathetic appeals involve notions of community and temporal urgency that are seen in two thematic appeals of environmental networks. First, NRDC and EDF use the existence of human suffering – most notably threats to children’s health and indigenous livelihoods – as reasons for action. Second, these environmental groups call to save endangered species, which are symbolic of the tragic state of the environment as a whole.

Human suffering is a common emotional theme of environmental networks to persuade their audiences of the impact of environmental problems on their own lives. Health harms are frequently cited in EDF and NRDC’s listservs. Descriptions of these health harms include concrete evidence including numbers at risk and the pervasiveness of these harms. “Unclean water kills four million people a year worldwide” (EDF News, 19 May, 2000). NRDC’s campaign against



arsenic in drinking water is a telling example of how these environmental networks construct their pathetic appeals to incite their audiences to action.

Tell the Clinton administration to get the arsenic out of our water. According to a 1999 study by the National Academy of Sciences, arsenic in drinking water causes bladder, lung and skin cancer, harms the central and peripheral nervous systems, as well as heart and blood vessels, and causes serious skin problems.... 34 to 56 million Americans drink tap water supplied by systems containing arsenic at average levels that pose unacceptable cancer risks (Earth Action, 25 February 2000).

This description exemplifies how environmental networks evoke pain and suffering to indicate the seriousness of the risk of arsenic, which can even be fatal. NRDC includes the scope of the threat – millions of Americans are an “unacceptable” risk. These rhetorical qualities indicate how environmental networks rely on concrete description couched in shared concerns for human and community health. As discussed in the section on ethos, they use scientific studies to prove the established risk, and add emotional appeal with vivid description of the personal impact of this risk. A majority of these emotional appeals emphasize threats to children:

In October 1999, the EPA reviewed the hazards of Dursban [chlorpyrifos], and concluded that many uses of the pesticide expose people, and especially children, to higher levels of the chemical than the agency considers safe (studies find Dursban levels in indoor air to be almost four times more concentrated at floor level, where small children play, than at two feet above the floor). Moreover, carpets, furniture, and house dust are long-term reservoirs for pesticides, and studies show that risks to toddlers and others in homes or schools often remain above EPA levels of concern even days after the chemical is applied (Earth Action, 19 April, 2000).

NRDC relies on the emotional appeal of innocent children to call for stronger protections from chemicals and pesticides that are more likely to harm infants and children than adults (Earth Action, 25 February 2000). Children are seen as particularly vulnerable because they do not have the knowledge or immune systems to resist toxins. Children are seen as innocent, not complicit in causing environmental harms, and needing protection, which is a particularly emotional appeal to the maternal and paternal instincts of audience members. Environmental networks construct pathetic appeals by emphasizing the greater risk of exposure to children, and their susceptibility to harmful substances, so that

their audiences feel personally affected by environmental threats.

The environmental networks I studied also make environmental appeals that are not within the personal experience of their predominantly American audiences. The health harms cited by NRDC and EDF also include narratives of indigenous suffering. "The claim about harm is a distinctive feature of advocacy networks. The environmental issues that most easily lend themselves to such portrayals involve displacement of traditional peoples or destruction of their livelihoods. These make for powerful appeals, and not surprisingly some of the best-known transnational networks have arisen to oppose deforestation and/or large dams" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 132). EDF and NRDC use the emotional salience of indigenous and impoverished people, who are framed as needing protection from undemocratic governments or dominant corporate interests. "Environmental problems affect all of us. But some communities, especially communities of color and poorer communities, are likely to suffer disproportionate impacts from environmental degradation. The Environmental Defense Fund is committed to finding equitable solutions for all" (EDFNEWS, 27 July, 1999). In this way, appeals to alleviate indigenous suffering emphasize equality in environmental protection. "Children in the desperately poor Denver neighborhood of Globeville know exactly what a Superfund site is. They live in one. To reach school, they pass through a grid of factories belching toxic chemicals" (EDFNEWS, 19 May, 2000). The appeals to children are supplemented by their impoverished state, which indicates they lack lobbying power and are held hostage to corporate interests. This email evokes images of factories continuously "belching" billows of toxic chemicals, daily poisoning school children. Environmental advocacy networks frame impoverished communities as victims of industrial pollution, deserving help from environmental activists.

The second pathetic theme that emerges in environmental on-line networks is the plight of endangered species. While there are many types of environmental arguments that concern species, what is significant for the study of hortatory arguments is the sense of temporality. All environmental discourse encompasses a thematic level of temporal concerns... the future and the past are presented as immanent in the present. Only in teleological framing does the very idea of the implementation of 'green' policy now make sense... temporal references become moral assessments, and expressions of time are mingled with aesthetic values" (Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäusler, 1999, p. 7). Hortatory arguments imbue a sense of urgency because they indicate the need for immediate action. Often the

pressure of time becomes persuasive when seen on a continuum of evolution or history. Present concerns in the context of historical trends reveals that the current environmental crisis has escalated into a severe rupture in the normal processes of evolution. That is, humans are disrupting the balance of the ecological function of the earth, and this becomes a reason for action:

Help save endangered salmon in the Columbia River Basin. Just 200 years ago, the Columbia River Basin was the largest fish-producing river in the world, with 10-16 million salmon and steelhead running up the river every year.... Today, all four types of salmon that still spawn in the Snake River are on the endangered species list. These fish are central to Native American culture, once supported thriving local businesses and fisheries, and for centuries brought nutrients upstream from the ocean to fuel the growth of animals and plants far inland (Earth Action, 25 February, 2000).

Populations of fish are viewed in a historical context that compares the status quo to historical environmental situations. Furthermore, NRDC links the decline of species to the destruction of the culture and livelihoods of Native Americans indicative of themes of indigenous suffering discussed earlier. In this way, species are symbolic of how both culture and the environment are threatened by continued progress.

A sense of urgency is also emphasized by environmental networks that face time pressures because their campaigns are often directly in contention with ongoing campaigns of resource extraction. This is exemplified in NRDC's efforts for protection of British Columbia's Spirit Bear. "While logging companies continue to clearcut their way across British Columbia at the rate of one acre of ancient forest every 66 seconds.... NRDC and other environmentalists have launched a massive campaign to bring U.S. consumer pressure to bear on the logging companies themselves and the large corporate lumber consumers that purchase their products" (Earth Action, 21 November, 2000). NRDC is careful to indicate the urgency of the crisis - logging companies are destroying forests at such a rate that the bear's habitat is in danger of disappearing completely. This incites people to act because of the urgency of this call to action, which is persuasive because people feel that they should act before it is too late to act.

NRDC's Spirit Bear campaign exemplifies how urgent calls to action can be persuasive. Their lobbying efforts helped pressure the premier of British Columbia to sign an agreement that immediately prohibited or deferred logging in 3.5 million acres of the ancient Great Bear Rainforest, that comprises the habitat

of the Spirit Bear (Earth Action, 11 April, 2001). NRDC heralds this agreement as “an uncommon example of successful collaboration among industry, environmentalists, native peoples, rural communities, and government... and a major victory for NRDC and our partners, members and activists” (Earth Action 11 April, 2001). This success speaks to the persuasiveness of temporal description that exists in many environmental calls, and are particularly vivid in the arguments studied here. The urgency of the environmental crisis is illustrated by specific examples of habitat destruction, and human suffering that are symbolic of larger unsustainable practices that portend planetary extinction.

### *Active Audience In Environmental Appeals*

The importance of understanding the audience in evaluating argumentation is widely noted (See Perleman and Olbrecht-Tyteca, 1969, Bitzer, 1968, Black, 1970, and Wander, 1984, e.g.). The ethos and pathos in environmental appeals involve the audience through their identification as environmentalists and strong emotional reactions. “An exhortation rests an appeal to action on the pathos of an audience’s desire to participate in the shared ethos represented” (Avram, 2001, 280). Audience participation in environmental activism called for in the on-line networks because their participation is cast as furthering a shared vision. This section looks at how ethos and pathos work together to invoke an active audience in environmental on-line networks.

Argumentation presumes the existence of a civil society and democratic deliberation (Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley 2001). The regulatory and negotiation approaches of the environmental on-line networks I studied reveal some of the ways that globalization influences our view of democracy - and the nature of democratic deliberation. An emerging civil society is empowered by new technology, and exemplifies how individuals and non-institutional groups are traversing domains previously occupied by state governments and other institutions. This contextualizes the ways that environmental groups can be persuasive - they must empower individuals to take action that furthers the group or cause as a whole. The globalization of new technology plays a key role in this persuasive ability because it produces a community of geographically distant like-minded people. NRDC and EDF invoke an audience in a few ways.

First, networks place an emphasis on individual communication, building on the environmental ethos discussed earlier. These arguments empower the audience to become an informed audience, and act on their knowledge of the environmental

crisis.

EDF proclaims its listserv provides “news you can use in your everyday life. At Environmental Defense we have plenty of ideas about ways you can help the environment” (EDFNEWS, 24 February, 2000). NRDC and EDF invest in the capability of their audiences by portraying activism as essential, but also easy. “Contacting us just got easier. Want to write to us, e-mail us, order a report, download a banner? We’ve gathered all the ‘Contact EDF’ information on a single convenient page of addresses and links. Find what you’re seeking without wasting time” (EDFNEWS, 23 March, 1999). This exemplifies how networks seek to utilize new technology to diminish the impediments of time, effort and resources discussed in the introduction. NRDC and EDF tailor their messages to specific groups within these environmental communities. They offer ways for people with different interests to become involved. NRDC provides sample letters in their calls for constituents to write their congresspersons for certain causes. In this way, individuals can see how their personal communication is political participation that can help make a difference.

Second, NRDC and EDF’s focus on diverse individual interests promotes a community of informed citizens. Both groups urge their audience to “learn and decide.” This rhetoric evokes the notion of democratic deliberation that is emphasized in argumentation. These environmental networks provide individuals with knowledge and the ability to be active within a community of environmentalists. “Donate to EDF’s oceans program. EDF Oceans staff work on everything from aquaculture to overfishing. Find out more about what they do, and then decide if you’d like to help support their work” (EDFNEWS, 30 March, 1999). Similarly, NRDC and EDF showcase green car choices which show consumers all they need to know about buying greener cars – EDF urges its members to take the green car pledge – promising to make their next car an environmentally friendly one (EDFNEWS, 4 May, 1999). Environmental networks offer ways that everyone can find a way to become involved that appeals to their interests with different programs and pledges.

NRDC and EDF emphasize notions of community to invoke the obligations of their audience for fellow citizens. “Online guides serve as tools for communities. How can people living near vehicle assembly plants, oil refineries, and steel mills find the facts they need to ensure a cleaner, healthier future? Answer: by looking at our new industrial-sector community guides” (EDF NEWS, 6 July 1999). This community is linked by new technology, and in this way EDF and NRDC use the

Internet to promote democratic participation. Twice a week, the poor children of Globeville discussed earlier “enter a computer classroom provided by Environmental Defense where they log on to a special Internet site and learn how to cajole the polluting factories to clean up their emissions.

By promoting the Internet in such communities, we recently won an important concession from America’s most powerful chemical companies” to voluntarily screen thousands of their chemicals for possible health hazards (EDF NEWS 19 May 2000). Here, pathos that creates a sense of community and thus promotes an active audience as NRDC and EDF urge other members of the global community to work to help protect these members who are helping themselves using the Internet.

Third, NRDC and EDF reveal the changing nature of activism in an era of globalization. The rhetoric of these networks points to the distinctions between hortatory arguments and other arguments, which address a relatively non-active audience who is not urged to demonstrate that they have been persuaded. However, new technology blurs the lines between attitudes and action, because communication is action. EDF and NRDC urge their audience to communicate their support for environmental causes to lawmakers. The chronicles of success of NRDC and EDF show that it is working. “About a year ago, NRDC began an aggressive effort to convince the president to confer monument status on the sequoias, and we asked you to help. You responded in unprecedented numbers – more than 10,000 of you faxed the White House supporting our monument proposal – and the result once again demonstrates the power we have to make a difference when we join forces to protect our nation’s natural treasures” (Earth Action, 19 April, 2000). This evidence shows that these environmental networks have the capacity to transform the meaning of activism – and it works, because the communication pressures political groups to legislate around environmental problems. In this way, the meaning of action changes as new technology makes it easier for people to voice their concerns about environmental issues. Networks increase communication in the political process through campaigns to sway public opinion through the communiques of their members. Activist audiences are empowered to continue to contribute to environmental campaigns when they see the success of their efforts verified by the networks.

### *Conclusions*

This study has shown how environmental networks use new technology to increase democratic participation. The rhetoric of NRDC and EDF show how

environmental groups use hortatory arguments to empower individuals and inform public opinion, creating a lobbying group sympathetic to their causes. Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley (2001) describe three challenges globalization poses for argumentation that the environmental networks I studied address. "The study of argumentation practice has developed out of a sense of commitment to a democratic process of deliberation, organized and institutionalized debate, and then political action" (Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley, 2001, 579). "The foundations of a civil society that are often taken for granted in argumentation scholarship are thus almost completely unformed in the new global era"(Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley, 2001, 579). NRDC and EDF work to reestablish infrastructure of civil society through communication networks. They invoke an active audience that invigorates environmental activism in an era of globalization. New technology gives people the tools to be active, and participate in public deliberation that responds to the changing sense of local community in an era of globalization. Second, "the representatives of these different knowledge regimes... have no systematic means of talking, let alone reasoning across their own unique problem areas or constituencies" (Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley, 2001, 580). The networks create a community to discuss environmental issues, providing a communication outlet for like-minded people to become informed. Third, "the entire global deliberative process lacks the transparency that democratic argumentation theory assume" (Klumpp, Hollihan and Riley, 2001, 580). The focus on informed citizens emphasizes the use of the Internet and other new technologies to increase the transparency of government. "Using the Freedom of Information Act, our Scorecard website has obtained unpublicized government information about local levels of toxic air pollution and made it available on the Internet. Find out about YOUR air" (EDFNEWS, 13 July, 1999). The activism promoted by EDF and NRDC work to increase the transparency of government processes, perhaps most explicitly in Legislative Watch which tracks environmental bills through Congress. Also, by providing information, these networks increase awareness of the environmental impacts of individual actions and international development policies. In this way, this study has shown how environmental on-line networks respond to the challenges posed by globalization.

"A recent article in 'The Economist' begins: 'There is a lot of blather about how the Internet interfaces with democracy, but some things make it all seem real. [www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org) is as real as hotdogs'" (EDF NEWS, 14 April, 1999). While commentary about the "realness" of hotdogs exceeds the scope of this paper, this

reveals the ways that these environmental networks use technology to influence public participation in political and legislative processes. The communication networks of NRDC and EDF give environmentalist groups a voice that helps in lobbying policy makers. NRDC and EDF's calls to action show how the meaning of action changes when individuals are networked through information and communication technologies. New technologies change what it means to be activist, and by making it easier to participate, ultimately increase democratic deliberation. Hortatory arguments of environmental on-line networks are persuasive because the individual has ways to take meaningful action in globalized world. In this way, hortatory rhetoric is critical to social change, because in this globalized world, individual action is key to garnering support for causes. In many ways, by emphasizing arguments other than strictly environmental appeals, emphasize how individuals are part of a global community. NRDC and EDF promote democratic participation by inciting activism through hortatory appeals that emphasize the obligations to human and non-human members of that community.

## NOTES

**[i]** While argumentation scholars perhaps all write about hortatory arguments in some way, scholarship articulating argument theory explicitly dealing with exhortation is not prolific. Many theorists have written about rhetoric that prompts people to action. See for example, Fulkerson's (1979) article on Martin Luther King's letter from a Birmingham jail.

**[ii]** Interestingly, during the course of this study, NRDC's membership rose from 300,000 to 500,000 over the course of three years, which I observed from the estimates included in their emails.

**[iii]** Due to a name change in the middle of this study, this listserv is referred to as both EDF Dispatch and EDF News here.

**[iv]** It warrants mentioning logos, the third Aristotelian appeal. I do not explore this persuasive rhetorical element because it is not utilized in hortatory arguments, which, as Black (1965) notes, are primarily persuasive through emotional appeals, and thus logos is not exhibited as vividly as ethos and pathos in the networks I studied.

**[v]** Both ethos and pathos are referred to here as discussed by Aristotle, in Book II of Rhetoric (ca 340-335 B.C.). See Herrick (1998) p. 75.

**[vi]** See Wapner, (1998), Lipschutz and Conca (1993), and Kamieniecki, (1991) for further discussion of environmental civil society.



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