APPLYING LAKOFF’S FRAMES TO CHANGES IN POLITICAL MEDIA AND CONGRESSIONAL POLICYMAKING

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Introduction

This thesis is a case study applying George Lakoff’s theories regarding frames to a specific series of legislation dealing with immigration. The language of politics is that of persuasion. Candidates must persuade people to vote for them in order to take office. Those in office must persuade their constituents that the course of action they are taking is the best. Government officials must persuade colleagues to support policy and legislation that they favor over others. Thus, in order to understand politics, we must understand the language of politics and persuasion. In order to understand how one is able to be persuaded, we must understand not only who is doing the persuading and through what channels the persuasion is sent, but how the person being persuaded thinks, how they are able to be persuaded in the first place. It is this understanding of political communication and persuasion that I will seek to uncover in the following pages.

In Chapter One the literature is examined regarding how Congress uses the media in a different manner now than in the past. Congress, as an institution, has historically changed and these changes have led to the new media usage by Senators and Representatives. The media have also changed, through the expansion of television news and the creation of the internet, and these changes have also influenced Congressional use of media. These factors combine to create the current media environment, where
members of Congress use the media in much the same way the president does. They speak through the media to other members of Congress as well as to their own constituents to gain support for their own agendas and to encourage voters to reelect them.

Chapter Two investigates George Lakoff’s theories regarding the cognitive science of frames. First, frames are examined, how they are created, and why frames are important. Next, the difference between surface frames and deep frames and how these frames are activated through language is examined. Then, Lakoff’s familial models, the Strict Father and the Nurturant Parent, are considered. These models are the basis of Lakoff’s application of frames on the field of politics. Finally, how the Nurturant Parent and Strict Father frameworks can coexist in one individual and how the familial models combine to create Lakoff’s theory of biconceptualism is examined. The understanding of these concepts is paramount to the analysis of this thesis, which occurs in the next section.

Chapter Three looks at a case study, the immigration reform legislation introduced in Congress in 2007. In the Senate, the life and death of S.1348, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 is examined. After closed-door deliberations, the bill is introduced in May of 2007. Its chances of success appeared strong at first, but then the bill faltered, stagnated, and collapsed in late June. In the House of Representatives, H.R.1645, the Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy, or STRIVE, Act of 2007 is also introduced in May. It disappeared to committee and never returned, but is eventually dispersed into the 2008 House
Appropriations Bill. In this section, it is examined how members of Congress appeared in the media during the lives of their respective bills. Finally, Lakoff’s familial models and theory of biconceptualism are applied to the messages these Senators and Representatives played out in the media.
Chapter One: Congress Goes Public

In today’s political landscape, it has become common for politicians to use the media for “communication offensives.” Members of Congress have borrowed from the president’s “bully pulpit” to increase their own power, get reelected, and even shape policy. They have incentive to conduct these aggressive media campaigns as a result of increasing homogeneity within the party as well as the ever-expanding polarization gap between the parties. According to Cook, “Every branch of government is more preoccupied with and spends more resources on the news media today than it did forty years ago” (Cook, 1998).

Though the “bully pulpit” of the media is typically associated with the executive branch, specifically the president, Congress has taken an increasing role in using the media to their advantage. Former U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) has said that “most lawmakers gear all of their messages to TV” (Doherty). Representatives and senators use this “bully pulpit” to aid them in the expansion of their leverage over the policy making process. Even though Congress as a whole has less of a media presence than the president, “both ‘backbenchers and leaders’ believe that ‘national publicity’ can … help them shape and move legislative initiatives in several different ways” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 13; Cook, 1998). They can use the media for a variety of
purposes. Lawmakers can follow the president’s lead and use media coverage to frame an issue, which may attract others to join their cause. Members of Congress can use media exposure to push a certain issue to the forefront of the agenda, creating pressure for a response from other parts of the political system. They can also “use the news to communicate their intentions to other political actors” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 15) or reassure interest groups and other attentive publics. Additionally, members can use the media to pressure other policymakers, including the president, to affect change in policy.

There are many reasons to use the media to accomplish these goals. Contemporary Representatives and Senators have far less time to engage in face-to-face conversations with other members than did their counterparts in the post-war years. Legislators use the media today to signal their intentions, concerns, and “(the) depth of their passion” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 16). Media exposure also increases Congress members’ stature within chambers and in the whole of Washington, increasing leverage with other political players. This, however, is not necessarily true, if only doing media business for media business’s sake. Successfully applying media savvy strategically, though, can enhance credibility and expand influence in specific policy areas. This increase in stature can lead to “climbing the ladder of power on the Hill” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 17) or even ascension to higher office. In fact, media savvy is almost a prerequisite nowadays to move to a leadership position. Media visibility also helps members of Congress in their own constituencies. “The right kind of coverage by different media, combined with self-generated information in the form of
newsletters, e-newsletters, and member web sites, affords lawmakers opportunities to engage in those ‘credit claiming,’ ‘position-taking,’ and ‘advertising’ activities that improve their chances for electoral success’ (Mayhew). There is even research discussing how individual members use the media to alter public opinion (Jacobs, Lawrence, Shapiro, & Smith). By appearing in the media, members of Congress are able to shape their message, not to appeal to public opinion, but to change the public sentiment in the direction of their own goals and desires. In addition, face-time in the media can equate, in some cases, to a free advertising campaign. Media coverage can especially be a boon to senators. Senators have greater incentive to manage media for constituency purposes, since representatives tend to have closer, direct, more personal ties with their (typically smaller) constituencies. Congressional members can try to manipulate the media in a variety of ways, including: news releases, video feeds to local stations, op-ed pieces to local or national press (typically regarding policies their constituents care about), use of Congressional recording studios and the satellite hookups therein for television/radio interviews, or even Internet-based media such as podcasts or weblogs.

**Party Polarization**

The Congressional use of media is part of a larger story. Contemporary politics has become more and more partisan, with the Democrats and Republicans moving farther away from each other. This leads to congressional members becoming more sensitive to their parties’ public image and having a solid message within the party. As well, “decline in differences in policy preferences within parties has resulted in bodies where individual
and collective interests more frequently collide” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two, 21”). Reelection and policy goals of members tend to coincide with the party’s desired outcomes (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 22). There also exists an incentive in gaining credit for the party’s stance and accomplishments in order to create a “brand name” for reelection. Party leaders have thus responded by organizing and leading PR campaigns advancing collective goals. There are differences, though, in how the different houses of Congress operate. House leaders use a combination of “outside” and “inside” strategies (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 22-23). Internally, we see leadership providing individualized benefits to members, manipulating voting procedures to structure members’ choices, and promoting member involvement in coalition building (Fenno 310-324; Peabody 91). Externally, we see said media-based communication (Cook 1998). Publicity is most critical for the House minority, especially if they do not control the presidency (and thus the original “bully pulpit”). Conversely, the House majority has less reason to compromise as a result of increased party unity; party polarization has made it harder to accomplish bipartisan consensus on issues. As a result, individual members have incentives to coordinate their communications. There are multiple benefits to this coordination: 1) it can increase leverage with the media, 2) it can aid in the creation of building a party “brand name,” 3) it can clarify and solidify policy positions. In order for the communication to be effective, though, it must be carefully synchronized. “Orchestrated communications campaigns conducted by parties are especially suited to the media context in which contemporary politicians wage their public relations campaigns” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 25-27).
A decentralized, more dynamic media environment has resulted in a news environment that allows for constant reporting and updating, unrestricted by nightly time slots. There exist now networks devoted solely to reporting news, where there were once only ABC, CBS, and NBC. In addition, the rise of multiple media outlets has increased the number of fronts on which individual members of Congress may access the media.

**The Media Landscape Changes**

This decentralization and increase in outlets has resulted in a change in political interaction. In the 1960’s, there were three major television networks and a handful of major print media newspapers. Approximately seventy-five percent of those 21 years and older reported they read a newspaper every day, while over two-thirds of those 18 years and older reported they routinely watched television news (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 28). In the early 1970’s, the media began focusing more on the presidency, so much so that some members of Congress complained about the amount of attention the president had been receiving. In recent years, cable news television stations and radio talk shows have appeared, leading to the creation of the all-day, every-day news cycle. These include such networks as CNN, MSNBC, FOX News, CNBC, and CSPAN. We’ve also seen the rise of political satire shows such as *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*, and *The Half-Hour News Hour*. These networks and shows have the opportunity for mass viewership, since, at the end of the 20th century, nearly eighty percent of households had either cable or satellite television (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Two,” 29). In addition, the dismantling of the Fairness Doctrine in the 1980’s has caused an increase in the amount of talk radio shows such as
The rapid expansion of the internet has only increased these changes, so that now even mainstream media utilizes it as not only an outlet, but a resource for finding and reporting information. This increase in outlets has increased the opportunities for Congressional members to utilize an “outside” strategy. These opportunities, though, do not necessarily carry the same weight, nor do they carry the weight that appearances had in preceding media times, when there were only three major networks. Changes have made it easier to target specific audiences/constituencies by using specialized media outlets. Simultaneously, an effort must be more coordinated to reach across multiple, more fragmented, audiences. This proliferation of media outlets has also created an environment where politicians are literally under constant scrutiny. This environment is much more dangerous, as making the wrong remark can haunt the unwary politician. To further compound the problem, these sound bites and video clips are saved forever digitally; they never go away. This means that, whereas in the past a mistake could be covered by simply waiting for time to pass and for the mistake to disappear from the public’s memory, now politicians can be chastised by a poorly-chosen phrase or insensitive joke for the rest of their career, with the media repeatedly using the audio or video clip.

The Post-War Congress

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, most members of Congress rarely involved media in their legislative proceedings. This is no longer the case. Now, members of Congress are routinely in front of the media; media appearances and legislation are considered complimentary activities
Past Congresses tended to be closed off, insulated from those not on the inside. In the “old” Congress, the “baronial” structure ruled the day, with cliques and small groups of policymakers. The elite remained in power through the use of rewards and threats, by handing out resources and patronage such as office space, increased staff, influencing committee assignments. They could also affect the rate at which legislation passed (or did not pass), blocking legislation their enemies supported and expediting that of their allies. The elite bargained behind closed doors to create compromises that could be agreed upon by the ruling cliques. They knew that legislative success depended on bipartisan cooperation, and they typically tried to “disagree without being disagreeable” (Fenno, 266). Decisions were arrived at depending on acceptable forms of behavior and mutual benefits. In order to do this, specific values were instilled that perpetuated this system, including apprenticeship, reciprocity, legislative work and specialization, deferring to leaders and the institution as a whole. Those who went against these values were punished and ostracized (Fenno, 271).

This type of legislative body tended to be “inward-looking.” This meant that rank-and-file members had little incentive to go to the media for aid on reaching political and policy goals. While some maverick members did use the media to advance their policy goals they were punished and ostracized by the chambers’ bosses. Congressional members in this era basically faced the following choice: use the media for district-related, reelection purposes only and thus have a chance to gain influence within the institution, or try to make a case to a national audience and be shunted to the side. However, there were occasions when “workhorses” would “leak” information to the
media. For instance, the Speaker of the House, in some instances, had daily press conferences. Over time, some realized that some media attention could help solidify informational relationships with their constituents. But, for the most part, legislation and policy were decided upon in the proverbial “smoke-filled backroom.” This close-knit, collegial, personal way of discussing and hammering out policy led to a more insider feeling. Peabody states, “an inside strategy is likely to define situations as family matters, and to feature face-to-face interaction among members” (91). By employing an outside strategy, people were more likely to “evoke a more ideological, issue-oriented definition of the situation” (Peabody, 91), which opposing elite cliques did not agree upon.

Changes inside and outside Congress prompted the Congress to change as well. The 1958 election brought in large amounts of Democratic freshmen to both the House and the Senate (82 and 18, respectively). Many believed that the existing structure contained barriers that kept them from moving through more liberal policy. Around this time, we see the rise of the Democratic Study Group. Some Democratic freshmen pushed to increase representation on the House rules committee, and grew in size and power as more and more joined and filled out seats on committees. Then, in 1961, Lyndon Johnson left the Senate to become vice president; he was replaced by Mike Mansfield, who had a more mild temperament and was pushed to spread power throughout the party. We also see some major changes in the 1960’s and 70’s. Whereas in 1960, the Congress did not have access to copy machines (such as Xerox) or WATS national phone lines, by 1977, every office was outfitted with both. In 1967, less than 50 percent of
Congressional members utilized the in-house recording studios; by 1978, over 80 percent did so. In addition, these new congressmen were more than three times as likely to use the studios once a week or more (Robinson, 65). In 1970, reformers pushed through the Legislative Reorganization Act, which reined in committee chairs, and redistributed power on the Hill. Further reforms opened up the Hill, increased transparency, weakened the role of seniority, and further cut into the power of the elite. As a result, power was transferred out from committee chairs and down to the rank-and-file members. At the end of the 1970’s, we find a Congress much more decentralized and egalitarian than before. Now, instead of small cliques of elites controlling policymaking, a much larger group of legislators were able to have significant input, since the process had been increasingly pushed to subcommittees and the floor. One of the consequences of this decentralization of Congress was the increase in access points; Congress was no longer as insulated as it once was. Rank-and-file members had to fight more on their own to be elected and thus, once elected, felt greater independence from the party.

The decline in party politics and the increase in access points coincided with an “explosion” in Washington-based interest groups (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Three,” 24). This led to the growth in the number of groups that formed around a set of ideas or a single issue instead of governmental material benefits. This also led to interest groups assuming some of the responsibilities (and power) typically handled by political parties. They were able to provide money and manpower for legislators whose beliefs coincided with their own, filling a gap that political parties were possibly unable to fill. This led the electorate to tend to advance “their preferences directly through interest groups”
identifying with interest groups as well as political parties. More senior members of Congress, attached to the older, baronial-style system in which they had succeeded, seemed to find service in this more egalitarian professional environment less rewarding, and the number of voluntary retirements among senior Representatives increased markedly in the mid-to-late 1970s. Following this, even more freshmen took office as a result of these positions opening up. By the end of the 70’s, “Congress was a more junior institution than it had been in quite some time” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Three,” 27). These freshmen that entered Congress had experience with television and radio, and appreciated the opportunities that the political media afforded. They used media to a greater extent in their public relations campaigns, and even began relying on media to stake positions on issues, advance agendas, and communicate with particular audiences. There were fewer pressures and more incentives to adopt an outside approach to governing than there had been previously. It was 1977 when the House finally allowed television cameras into chambers, although the Senate did not follow suit until 1986, nine years later.

**Presidential Communication Strategy: Congress Responds**

It is important to note that, in the midst of this period, Ronald Reagan was elected president. He was already a “going public” kind of president, strategically using media to gain support. He was able to create a scenario in many legislators’ minds where the president who “followed a carefully orchestrated public strategy could bring the legislative branch around on policies that mattered to him” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Three,” 32). In the 1980’s, Congressional members answered the president’s media
savvy with some savvy of their own. They already had experience with media, “both to get elected and to shape policy outcomes” (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Three,” 33), but still found themselves at a disadvantage as far as television coverage was concerned.

Where the White House is covered by the press twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Congress is not in session on the weekends. In 1986, Don Edwards, Democratic representative from California said, “We die on weekends in the media. Meanwhile, there’s the president smiling and getting into his plane and waving at everybody” (Ehrenhalt). So in the early 1980s, a growing number of Representatives started to urge their chamber leaders to emulate the president and his strategy of going public.

Polarization of parties led to pressure placed on leaders to advance partisan politics. Some members went so far as to discuss on which shows they would prefer to appear, even discussing which shows were best for maximum exposure of their message (Ehrenhalt). In the House, increased leadership power creates leaders who provide tangible benefits to members (committee assignments, campaign funds, etc.), structure around members’ policy choices, and promote involvement in coalition building. In the Senate, increases in partisanship create more active leaders, but we do not see the same centralization of leadership; Senate rules do not favor leaders. We also find that, as a result of the changes in the Congress-media relationship, House members feel greater safety once elected, but greater anxiety about getting reelected. Conversely, Senators feel less safety, but find a greater opportunity for creating a national persona and becoming nationally prominent (Robinson, 70-71). Meanwhile, interest groups and think tanks have become more polarized, realizing that they can no longer play both sides. The result of all this is that public relations interaction is now a requirement for Congressional
leadership, meaning that they must “regularly and routinely” interact with the media (including cyber-space).

There is also evidence that the role and structure of Congressional leadership has changed as a result of media influence. Chronologically speaking, we can look back to Speaker Rayburn to find inklings of the press infiltrating Congress (Foote, 136). Here, we see a much more collegial, personal relationship between Rayburn and a small group of friends in the media. During his five-minute, daily press conferences, Rayburn would be asked “softball” questions and would have younger, perhaps “tougher,” reporters steered away by his close-knit “inner circle” (Foote, 136). Before Rayburn, the institutional organization of the House was quite different. First, there was the era of “czar rule” (Cooper & Brady). Power was consolidated in the hands of the Speaker, and other member of his party looked to him as leader. He possessed the ability to appoint committees, chair and lead the Rules Committee, control recognition of members to conduct business on and off the floor, and reward or sanction committee members as he saw fit. Following the breakdown of czar rule in the early 20th century, caucus rule was put into place, which resulted in inefficient legislative processes. The Republicans actually began to rely on a steering committee instead of their caucus, and eventually found that to be cumbersome and slow-moving. The end result was that they decided to forgo the whole thing and use small, informal board meetings to make decisions (Cooper & Brady). Seniority became more important, the power of party leaders, including the Speaker, diminished, and the rules committee began acting as its own entity instead of an “arm of the leadership” (Cooper & Brady). Rayburn, along with the next two Speakers
of the House, hated interaction with the press. He, McCormick, and Albert (who were protégés of Rayburn) believed that journalists were intrusive and unnecessary. With network expansion of newscasts and their fascination with the president, these Speakers felt fairly justified in their position on the media (Foote, 137). Under this type of leadership, power was further dispersed and the leadership style was marked by categories of “personal friendship and loyalty, permissiveness, restrained partisanship and conflict reduction, informality, and risk avoidance” (Cooper & Brady). Following Albert, Tip O’Neill became the first Speaker to really be pulled into the limelight by the media. He was the leader that opened the House to media coverage in 1979, and the first to have an active press secretary (Foote, 141). Cooper and Brady found that the institutional changes of Congress caused a different type of leader to emerge. They argue that the institutional context determines leadership power and style, and that the most effective leadership molds to the context of the institution. Since the institution was allowing for more and more media intrusion, including the advent of C-SPAN, C-SPAN II, expansion of newscasts from 15 minutes to 30 minutes to all day, every day, and divided party control (Harris), it allowed for Speakers such as O’Neill, Wright, and Foley, who did fairly well in the spotlight, to rise to power and prominence (Foote, 142). As a result of this public speakership, the Congress better balances the White House in the public eye, the Speaker is a more potent leader (and a greater target for the opposition), and forces the leadership to “shape the environment in which they act,” as opposed to simply bargaining within normal, older, constraints (Harris).
Institutionalizing the “Public” Congress

As previously mentioned, in today’s Congress, legislation and media interaction are complementary, not contradictory. It is adaptability that has been tested and confirmed as members of Congress continue to link PR savvy and policymaking. One of the ways to realize how Congress has changed from inward- to outward-looking is in relation to staffing decisions. Mostly, this has to do with the rise of the position of congressional press secretary or communications director. Some members rely rather heavily on their press secretary, as they place high importance on media coverage. Others prefer little publicity. Formally designating someone to deal with the media legitimizes the link therein and creates a system for communication. “It provides the press corps with an identifiable person in a congressional office… they can contact directly” (Cook, 1988, 1049) and means there is someone readily available who can tend to and pay attention to the media. A relationship develops between the communication director and the press, creating the ability to frame messages effectively.

Even during the “baronial” Congress, there existed staffers who would deal with the press. These staffs were much smaller before reforms of the 1970s allowed for resource allocation to rank-and-file members. These staffs were also fairly simple organizations, whereas now they are rather differentiated; press secretaries were not the norm. In the 87th Congress (1961 – 1962), very few employed a staffer that dealt with the media, only 3 percent (14 members) of the House had full time press officers (Malecha & Reagan). None of the committees had someone formally staffed with publicity activities. Press secretaries were more common in the Senate, likely as a result of the media’s
tendency to focus on the Senate. Senators may have found it more positive to have a press secretary if they wished to use the Senate as a stepping stone to the White House. In the 87th Congress, 59 offices had no formal press secretary, 3 had a part-time press secretary, 37 had one full-time press secretary, and 1 had two full-time press secretaries. Slightly more than half of the chairs had full-time press secretaries, but no standing committee staffed a press aide (Malecha & Reagan, “Chapter Four,” 8). “The one noticeable exception to leaders taking to the public arena was on the side of the congressional minority” (Malecha & Reagan, Chapter Four,” 10). Tip O’Neill was the first Speaker to have an active press secretary. This made it easier to launch attacks and offer apologies for mistakes, as it was simpler for his press secretary to do these things than for them to come straight from the Speaker himself (Foote, 142).

Congressional staffing has changed to reflect the new outward-looking, media-centered institution that Congress now is. Communication directors are now found in nearly all members’ offices, and they also occupy staffing positions on many committees. In the 98th Congress, ninety-five percent of Senators and sixty-six percent of Representatives had a staffer formally charged with press responsibilities, most of which were full-time press secretaries. Almost half of the senators had one or more people assigned to public relations, and fifteen of these employed three or more aides for public relations. Between the 98th and the 109th Congresses, these staffing levels remained comparable. In the 109th Congress, every senator had an aide tasked with press responsibilities, and ninety-five percent of the House had such; most of these were full-time press aides. There have also been massive increases in committee publicity aides
and communications personnel. This can be attributed, in leadership’s case, to their role as standard bearers for the party message. Senator Harry Reid, shortly after becoming Senate Minority Leader, launched the Democratic Communications Center, which includes both staff and communications directors, a press secretary for Reid’s home state, and communication specialists devoted to Hispanic media and to the Internet.

**Congress Goes Online**

The institutionalization of press secretaries has only increased with the rise of the Internet and online congressional offices. All members of Congress have an email and a website, which some refer to as their “virtual district office” (Malecha & Reagan, Chapter Four,” 20). It was 1993 when Senator Charles Robb (D-Va.) established the first Congressional e-mail address. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), shortly thereafter, established the first Congressional website. A 2000 survey of Congress showed that approximately one-quarter of the fifty interviewees had never been online (Crabtree). Some did not understand its importance or influence as a new medium, while some feared that utilization of these tools would lead to an influx of communication, overloading their office and equipment. Others were worried that the Internet would take over and displace the role that communication and deliberation played in the Congress. In 1996, the Internet Caucus was created as a bipartisan group with the ideals of educating fellow lawmakers and moving Congress forward into the future (Elperin). Five years later, all members had web pages and e-mail addresses. These web pages vary greatly in terms of information, style, and complexity. Members can choose to customize their sites however they prefer. These sites have become important for public relations
activities, both for members and parties; they can solidify an image, communicate with constituents and key audiences, highlight initiatives, or muster support for their party’s agenda or programmatic goals. The major goal of these online changes lies with communicating with key audiences such as constituents, interest groups, partisan activists, and reporters; this is documented by the type of information highlighted on the site. Nearly all of Congressional websites posted “Press Releases” in both 2006 and 2007. “Those levels … eclipse … the percentages of sites including certain types of constituency-oriented features” (Malecha & Reagan, Chapter Four,” 26). Some of these sites even include a blog, though it took some time before they began appearing. Only ten percent of 2007 Congressional sites included blogs. Even then, they are not really characterized by the typical things a blog includes, i.e. “creative exchange of ideas about events and issues as they are unfolding,” (Malecha & Reagan, Chapter Four,” 28) which is understandable for a politician. More and more, though, members are recognizing the “punch” that blogs can add to their sites and their communication efforts. The “virtual district office” allows for integration between publicity and Congressional activities. Web searching tends to be intentional, thus “members interested in shaping policy outcomes… must therefore couple this direct public appeal with a pitch that reaches a larger, more variegated audience” (Malecha & Reagan, Chapter Four,” 30). This can include getting the attention of media outlets and news organizations, which broadens the scope they reach and enhances credibility of message. Media-friendly websites tend to help in this regard.
In addition, the media (as a result of staff cuts and urgency to fill time) has begun incorporating the Internet into their reporting. As previously mentioned, journalists now depend on the internet not only as an outlet, but a resource. Ninety percent of journalists use the Internet for research or reference ("Journalists Using the Internet More and More"). Slightly fewer, though a still significant amount, of journalists serving small weekly or daily rural newspapers do the same. A 2003 study asked national and local reporters if they used Congressional websites for info; nearly all responded "yes" (Foundation, 2002). The results of this are that Congress plays a larger role in framing issues the way they want, since the information is coming straight from them to the media.

The issue of framing by Congressional leadership is an important one, since more and more members of Congress are no longer changing their message to fit what public opinion tells them (Jacobs, Lawrence, Shapiro, and Smith). Instead, as a result of the aforementioned changes in the media and the operations of Congress, Senators and Representatives are using public opinion to frame their messages to alter public opinion to match their own goals. One report finds that, on an individual level, members of Congress rely more heavily on "personal" correspondence to track their constituents' opinions, such as face-to-face meetings, letters, and phone calls, as opposed to public opinion polls (Jacobs, Lawrence, Shapiro, and Smith). What this suggests is that Congressional leadership is taking advantage of media outlets and framing techniques to alter and not simply respond to public opinion.
Chapter Two: Framing and the Familial Models

In 2002, the second edition of the book called Moral Politics was released. This work laid the ground for a new conceptualization of how politics and government are viewed by the public. The author was Dr. George Lakoff, a professor of cognitive linguistics at the University of California – Berkley. He followed with (to date) three other works: Don’t Think of an Elephant, Whose Freedom?, and Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision. Dr. Lakoff was a founding member of the now-defunct Rockridge Institute, a think-tank devoted to the reframing of important political issues into more progressive terms ("Profile: George Lakoff").

In Moral Politics and his subsequent works, Lakoff argues that people look at and process political issues through familial models. He contends that people tend to group the nation together in the same way that they group a family together. He introduces the Strict Father model and the Nurturant Parent model, which are frameworks through which people see the world, their own morals, and thus the government and political issues (Lakoff, 2002, 65, 108). In a later work, Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision, Lakoff and other members of the Rockridge Institute tackle the issue of people who may see different issues through different models. For example, there is a group of fiscally conservative Democrats in the House of Representatives who
call themselves the Blue Dog Coalition (Coalition). These individuals tend to view social issues through the typically progressive frame of the Nurturant Parent model, while simultaneously framing fiscal issues with the Strict Father model, a typically conservative framework. Lakoff refers to these people as “biconceptuals,” since both frameworks exist within the same mind (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 14).

**The Importance of Frames**

In order to understand why frames are important in politics, we must first understand what is meant by “frames.” According to Lakoff (2004, xv),

> [f]rames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions. In politics our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out policies.

He also states (xv),

> [y]ou can’t see or hear frames. They are part of what cognitive scientists call the ‘cognitive unconscious’ – structures in our brains that we cannot consciously access, but know by their consequences: the way we reason and what counts as common sense. We also know frames through language. All words are defined relative to conceptual frames. When you hear a word, its frame (or collection of frames) is activated in your brain [emphasis added].

Lakoff illustrates this by contending one should “not think of an elephant.” This is, of course, impossible. In the mere act of consciously trying to *not* think of an elephant, we inevitably think of an elephant. He provides us with four morals that build on this concept (Lakoff, “Simple Framing,” 2006):
Moral 1: Every word evokes a frame.

A frame is a conceptual structure used in thinking. The word elephant evokes a frame with an image of an elephant and certain knowledge: an elephant is a large animal (a mammal) with large floppy ears, a trunk that functions like both a nose and a hand, large stump-like legs, and so on.

Moral 2: Words defined within a frame evoke the frame.

The word trunk, as in the sentence "Sam picked up the peanut with his trunk," evokes the Elephant frame and suggests that "Sam" is the name of an elephant.

Moral 3: Negating a frame evokes the frame.

Moral 4: Evoking a frame reinforces that frame.

Every frame is realized in the brain by neural circuitry. Every time a neural circuit is activated, it is strengthened.

He relates these to President Richard Nixon’s Watergate scandal, when the president “… addressed the nation on TV. He stood before the nation and said, ‘I am not a crook.’ And everybody thought of him as a crook” (Lakoff, 2004, 3). By simply attempting to negate the frame, he not only sparked it in the populace’s minds, but he strengthened it.

Frames are important in politics because key words or phrases can be used to invoke frames that one knows one’s audience possesses. For instance, when speaking to a group of environmentalists, words or phrases such as “green,” “renewable resources,” or “fuel efficiency” might invoke frames that are seen as positive and in-line with the group’s goals. Conversely, “oil” and “Alaskan drilling” may invoke very negative frames. At the same time, the mental frames of a group of oil executives could be just the opposite. The first group of words and phrases might invoke very negative frames and
turn the group against a candidate quickly, while the second group of words would invoke positive thoughts, and thus invoke a positive response.

Invoking certain frames is a matter of understanding what goal you are attempting to reach. If you are trying to please someone, it would be a wise choice not to mention topics he or she might find upsetting. This rudimentary concept provides understanding as to why one would make this choice using Lakoff’s morals of framing. By mentioning these items, one invokes a certain frame. If this frame is a positive one, then positivity is reinforced. If it is a negative one, then that negativity is reinforced. To further understand this, we must dig a little deeper.

**Surface Frames and Deep Frames**

In *Thinking Points*, Lakoff and his Rockridge Institute colleagues explain surface frames and deep frames, and how they interact by using the “war on terror” as an example. Deep frames are “the most basic frames that constitute a moral worldview or a political philosophy. Deep frames define one’s overall ‘common sense.’” Without deep frames, there is nothing for surface frames to hang on to. Slogans do not make sense without the appropriate deep frames in place” (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 29). While both surface frames and deep frames are invoked through language, it is the deep frames that guide everyday actions and thoughts.
Using the “war on terror” example, Lakoff explains that this phrase only began appearing following the events of September 11, 2001 (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 29):

The conceptual frame associated with “war” has semantic roles: armies, a fight, a moral crusade, a commander in chief, a capture of territory, the surrender of an enemy, and patriots supporting the troops. “War” implies the necessity of military action. When we’re in a war, all other concerns are secondary.

Lakoff then explains that the addition of the term “terror” to “war” creates a situation in which “terror” is considered the opposing “army.” However, “terror” is not a physical enemy that can be defeated on a battlefield, it is simply a phrase, an emotion, a state of mind. He continues (29-30):

Moreover, the “war on terror” frame is self-perpetuating; merely being in a war scares citizens, and reiteration of the frame creates more fear. So there is no end to the “war on terror,” because you can’t permanently capture and defeat an emotion...

He recognizes that “war on terror” (and its self-perpetuation) is a “powerful surface frame”, but questions why it continues to resonate with people, because it is incredibly misleading (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 30):

*It works because it relies on conservative deep frames. When something “resonates” or “makes sense,” it engages your deep frames. Conservatives have long advanced the idea that our military can—and should—be used to shape foreign policy: our strength is the size and capacity of our military. They have advanced a retributive crime policy—punish the wrongdoers, no need to look at systemic causes of crime. The “war on terror” activates these deep frames, and*
politicians, the media, and the public continue to use the phrase because the conservative deep frames have become so pervasive.

Lakoff proceeds to explain the difficulty of cultivating deep frames, which are necessary for surface frames to have any sort of meaning (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 31):

*It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of deep framing—the framing of moral values and principles. It is a long-term enterprise and entirely different from crafting short-term messages about a single issue or candidate that use surface frames, and it is more important. Without the long-term deep frames in place, the short-term slogans have no structure to build upon. They don’t resonate because they don’t reinforce any deep frames.*

*So how are deep frames embedded in the public mind? To cultivate new deep frames requires going on the offense with your values and principles, repeating them over and over and over.*

Lakoff stresses that this process is not one that can be accomplished reactively, only proactively. He also iterates that such a venture takes time and organization, with many groups concerting efforts to bring about change in the deep frame structure.

According to Lakoff and others at the Rockridge Institute, most, if not all, Americans have (at least somewhat) conservative deep frames somewhere within their mind. The messages, words, and phrases of the right have been repeated and thus embedded into the unconsciousness of our nation. This is not to say that these deep frames did not always exist within us, only that they have been strengthened and brought to the forefront of our framework through conservative messages. Now that we understand what surface and deep frames are, we can use that to understand more about which deep frames provide motives for certain feelings, actions, and “common sense.”
Our Nation is a Family

Lakoff first developed the “nation as a family” metaphor after reading the Republican “Contract with America,” a collection of issues important to the current Republicans in Congress. Having read this document, he says (Lakoff, 2004, 4-5):

The question I asked myself was this: What do the conservatives’ positions on issues have to do with each other? If you are a conservative, what does your position on abortion have to do with your position on taxation? What does that have to do with your position on the environment? Or foreign policy? How do these positions fit together? What does being against gun control have to do with being for tort reform? What makes sense of the linkage? I could not figure it out. I said to myself, “These are strange people. Their collection of positions makes no sense.” But then an embarrassing thought occurred to me. “I have exactly the opposite position on every issue. What do my positions have to do with one another?”...

Eventually the answer came. And it came from a very unexpected place. It came from the study of family values. I had asked myself why conservatives were talking so much about family values. And why did certain values count as "family values" while others did not? Why would anyone in a presidential campaign, in congressional campaigns, and so on, when the future of the world was being threatened by nuclear proliferation and global warming, constantly talk about family values?...

Given the existence of the metaphor linking the nation to the family, I asked the next question: If there are two different understandings of the nation, do they come from two different understandings of family?

I worked backward. I took the various positions on the conservative side and on the progressive side and I said, "Let's put them through the metaphor from the opposite direction and see what comes out." I put in the two different views of the nation, and out popped two different models of the family: a strict father family and a nurturant parent family. You know which is which.

The Nurturant Parent morality represents the more progressive viewpoint, where the Strict Father morality represents the conservative viewpoint. Each group sees the nation
as a family, but how family is understood has to do with the individual’s deep frames. In
Thinking Points, the author explains the understanding of relationship between country
and family as “the homeland as home, the citizens as siblings, the government (or the
head of government) as parent.” The author states (49):

It’s no accident that our political beliefs are structured by our idealization of the
family. Our earliest experience with being governed is in our families. Our
parents “govern” us: They protect us, tell us what we can and cannot do, make
sure we have enough money and supplies, educate us, and have us do our part in
running the house.

The author then makes the comparison by contending that “[t]he government’s duty is to
citizens as a parent’s is to children: provide security (protect us); make laws (tell is what
we can or cannot do); run the economy (make sure we have enough money and supplies);
provide public schools (educate us)” (Lakoff, Thinking Points: Communicating Our

The chain of reasoning works like this: deep frames affect how one understands
how a family functions; the understanding of family affects how one views morality;
one’s morals affect how one understands and views political issues and thus how one
supports specific candidates. We understand deep frames, so let’s delve into the
differences between the two familial models that affect how people view the world (and
thus politics): the Strict Father morality and the Nurturant Parent morality.

The Strict Father

The Strict Father morality has mostly to do with the following assumption: “the
world is, and always will be, a dangerous and difficult place” (Rockridge Institute, “The
Conservative Worldview”). There exists the belief that there is tangible evil in the world, and that children are born wild and undisciplined. As such, they are naturally bad since, if given the choice, they will only do what feels good instead of what is morally good. They must be taught discipline so that they can stand up to both internal and external evils.

In this worldview the male father figure is dominant. He has the responsibility to support, protect, and provide for his family. The female mother figure’s responsibility is to support the father’s decisions and to provide care and comfort for the children. It is assumed that both parents love their children, but show it through different means. The father metes out discipline in order to prepare the child for adulthood, where discipline is viewed as a moral necessity for success. If the father does not teach them discipline as children, then they grow up succumbing to evil, since they lack the ability to resist it. “This focus on discipline is seen as a form of love—‘tough love’” (Rockridge Institute, “The Conservative Worldview”). At the same time, the mother loves her children, but is viewed as weaker than the father. She is “not strong enough to protect and support the family or fully discipline the children on her own” (Rockridge Institute, “The Conservative Worldview”). “As a "mommy," she tends to be overly soft-hearted and might well coddle or spoil the child. The father must make sure this does not happen, lest the children become weak and dependent” (Rockridge Institute, “The Conservative Worldview”). Lakoff’s model continues as such upon the child reaching adulthood:

*Competition is necessary for discipline. Children are to become self-reliant through discipline and the pursuit of self-interest. Those who succeed as adults are the good (moral) people and parents are not to "meddle" in their lives. Those children who remain...*
dependent—who were spoiled, overly willful, or recalcitrant—undergo further discipline or are turned out to face the discipline of the outside world.

When everyone is acting morally and responsibly, seeking their own self-interest in a self-disciplined fashion, everyone benefits. Thus, instilling morality and discipline in your children is also acting for the good of society as a whole.

With everyone looking after their own self-interests (and those of their family), we find, in theory, a balanced society. Imagine a game of tug-of-war. With equal force on both sides, the rope would be in equilibrium. It would not be pulled to the left or right, since the people on the left and right would each be pulling as hard as they could, in their own self-interest. Thus, by acting in his or her own self-interest, each person would be contributing to the whole of society.

With its emphasis on discipline, there is no surprise that a fundamental principle of the Strict Father is a strict morality. Basically, the strict morality contends that evil exists in the world, both externally and internally. “Internal evil is fought with self-discipline and self-denial to achieve "self-control." "Weakness," and the tolerance of it, is immoral since it implies being unable to stand up to evil. Punishment is required to balance the moral books: If you do wrong, you must suffer a negative consequence” (Institute, “The Conservative Worldview”). The morality emphasizes the necessity for competition to learn discipline. Finally, the morality “demonstrates a natural Moral Order: Those who are moral should be in power” (Institute, “The Conservative Worldview”). This gives lead to dominance of one over another:

*God above Man; Man above Nature; Adults above Children; Western Culture above Non-western Culture; America above other nations. (There are other traditional aspects of the Moral Order that are less accepted than they used to be:"

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Finally, it is understood that perpetuation of evil and immorality is, in and of itself, evil and immoral. Thus, it is the right and responsibility of every individual to seek out and destroy immorality in all aspects of life.

To understand how this relates to a conservative’s view politics, let us go back to our Nation as Family metaphor. If the government is the father and all of the citizens are children, then we may understand a little easier. The government provides laws for us to follow, in order to teach us discipline. Those who gain this discipline look out for their own self-interests and succeed as a result. Those who lack discipline must face the “tough love” of hardship. Upon the children reaching adulthood, the father (government) must not interfere with the children’s (citizens’) lives, and thus shall not hinder each individual receiving what he or she deserves, be it success for the disciplined or misery for the undisciplined. After all, through suffering, one will learn discipline and become successful eventually. We see examples of this in the conservative calls for lower taxes and an end to social programs. In the conservative mind, taxes are punishment for success and social programs are rewards for failure; for them, this is a completely backwards way of doing things. In fact, conservatives are mostly at odds with progressives because they see things as Strict Father morality, as opposed to the Nurturant Parent morality.
The Nurturant Parent

As opposed to the Strict Father morality, where the world is assumed to be a dangerous place, with evil lurking around every corner, the Nurturant Parent morality assumes that the world is basically good and can be made better through our actions. The Nurturant Parent realizes that the world we live in today may be dangerous at times, but believes that it is our responsibility to make the world a better place to live. For the Strict Father, children are born bad, and must be instilled with discipline to resist and fight evil. The Nurturant Parent believes that children are born inherently good, but, like the world around us, can be improved. While the Strict Father believes that discipline is paramount, and can only be obtained through self-restriction, the Nurturant Parent emphasizes two key principles: empathy and responsibility (Rockridge Institute, “The Progressive Worldview”).

In this worldview, there is no dominant parental figure, in terms of male over female. In the Strict Father worldview, there are clearly defined male and female roles, and each is necessary for the morality to work properly. In the Nurturant Parent model,

> both parents (if there are two) are responsible for running the household and raising the children, although they may divide their activities. The parents' job is to be responsive to their children, nurture them, and raise their children to nurture others. Nurturance requires empathy and responsibility

(Rockridge Institute, “The Progressive Worldview”). This implies that traditional gender roles (upon which the Strict Father hinges) are not set. For instance, both the mother and father may work to provide for the family, or it may represent a household in which the mother works and the father cares for the children, or it may even represent a single-
Effective nurturing requires empathy, which is feeling what someone else feels—parents have to figure out what all their baby’s cries mean in order to take care of him or her. Responsibility is critical, since being a good nurturer means being responsible not only for looking after the well-being of others, but also being responsible to ourselves so that we can take care of others. Nurturant parents raise children to be empathetic toward others, responsible to themselves, and responsible to others who are or will be in their care. Empathy connects us to other people in our families, our neighborhoods, and in the larger world. Being responsible to others and oneself requires cooperation. In society, nurturant morality is expressed as social responsibility. This requires cooperation rather than competition, and a recognition of interdependence.

Clearly the Nurturant Parent model and the Strict Father model are at odds. The Strict Father encourages competition in order to weed out immorality and establish hierarchy. Conversely, the Nurturant Parent spurns competition and embraces cooperation. Instead of looking only after one’s own self-interest, the Nurturant Parent teaches his or her child to care for and about others. While we saw equilibrium in the Strict Father’s worldview through everyone pulling for his or her own self-interest, we find balance in the Nurturant Parent’s worldview through shared responsibility and cooperation. In this instance, imagine an inflated balloon. The balloon does not pop because the air pressure on the inside of the balloon is the same as the air pressure on the outside of the balloon. There is equilibrium because there is equality and “cooperation” between the two sides.
As with the Strict Father model, there is little surprise when we find the underlying principle of the Nurturant Parent model, “a fundamental ethic of care that says: Help, Don't Harm” (Rockridge Institute, “The Progressive Worldview”). Lakoff breaks this single ethic into multiple values: Strength, Safety and Protection, Fulfillment in Life, Fairness, Freedom, Opportunity, Prosperity, Community, Cooperation, Trust, Honesty, and Open Communication. He defines each as such, in terms of the Nurturant Parent (Rockridge Institute, “The Progressive Worldview”):

**Strength:** You have to be strong and competent to carry out your responsibilities.

**Safety and Protection:** A nurturing parent wants his/her family to be safe, which requires that they protect them, and themselves, from harm. The motivation to protect others comes from empathy, and the ability to do so comes from responsibility and strength.

**Fulfillment in Life:** When we empathize with others and take care of them responsibly, we desire their well-being, and want their dreams to come true. Happy and fulfilled people want to see others happy and fulfilled. Correspondingly, unhappy, unfulfilled people tend not to want others to be happier than they are. It is, therefore, a moral requirement to be a happy, fulfilled person.

**Fairness:** When we care for others, we want to treat them fairly, help them to treat others fairly, and ensure that others do treat them fairly.

**Freedom:** Freedom allows us to meet our needs, fulfill our potential, realize our dreams, and help others to do so as well.

**Opportunity:** Caring for others means ensuring they have opportunities—to achieve fulfillment in life, to be treated fairly, and to be able to care for themselves and others.

**Prosperity:** Without prosperity, there can be no opportunity.

**Community:** Healthy communities are based on cooperation, honesty, trust, and open communication.
Cooperation: Responsibility to others requires cooperation and empathy. Cooperation is the basis for community, and requires open communication, honesty and trust.

Trust: Trust is needed for open communication and cooperation. We are trustworthy when we treat others fairly and responsibly.

Honesty: Honesty is the hallmark of open communication, and is necessary for trust and cooperation.

Open Communication: Open communication is at the heart of empathy and responsibility. To know how to care for others, we must communicate with them to understand their needs. Cooperation relies on two-way communication.

Thus, as this is applied to the Nation as Family metaphor, we find ourselves seeing necessity for a strong government to carry out progressive goals as well as provide for safety and protection, not just for people, but for everything under humanity’s care. This includes human life, dignity and health as well as the environment, translating into police and fire departments, environmental protections laws, and laws protecting people from those who would take advantage of them (including irresponsible business practices). The Nurturant Parent finds fulfillment through strong education in public schools as well as grants for arts and culture. This also includes the lack of governmental influence in religious and/or spiritual traditions. The Nurturant Parent sees fairness and freedom in our civil liberties, as well as social programs that create opportunity and provide for its people (universal education and health care). Prosperity and success are not based on material wealth, as in the Strict Father model, but the quality of relationships built and sustained, such as in a strong community. This is precluded by the need for cooperation and open channels of communication. Like a nurturant parent, “the job of a progressive government is to care for and protect the population, especially those
who are helpless; to guarantee democracy (the equal sharing of political power); to promote the well-being of all through cooperation; and to ensure fairness for everyone. Empathy and responsibility are required to meet all of these goals” (Rockridge Institute, “The Progressive Worldview”).

**Biconceptualism**

Up to this point, the argument has been to frame the familial models solely as the Strict Father model and the Nurturant Parent model, using the terms “conservative” and “liberal” or “progressive” as little as possible. This is to separate the familial models from political parties as much as possible. This is because of biconceptualism, which is the idea that both the Strict Father (typically conservative) and Nurturant Parent (typically progressive) models exist in each of us, at least in a passive state. Lakoff describes it as such (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 2006, 14-15):

*You may live by progressive values in most areas of your life, but if you see Rambo movies and understand them, you have a passive conservative worldview allowing you to make sense of them. Or you may be a conservative, but if you appreciated The Cosby Show, you were using a passive progressive worldview...*

*Biconceptualism makes sense from the perspective of the brain and the mechanism of neural computation. The progressive and conservative worldviews are mutually exclusive. But in a human brain, both can exist side by side, each neurally inhibiting the other and structuring different areas of experience. It is hardly unnatural—or unusual—to be fiscally conservative and socially progressive, or to support a liberal domestic policy and a conservative foreign policy, or to have a conservative view of the market and a progressive view of civil liberties.*
Biconceptuals are not to be confused with moderates. According to Lakoff, moderates are people who actively seek out a sliding scale issue and consciously place themselves directly in the middle of it (Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision, 15). Biconceptuals are people who may agree with the conservative position on one issue, but agree with the progressive position on a different item. Most people are biconceptuals; they are the people who make up the center. Depending on whether they lean to the left or right, Lakoff refers to them as “partial conservatives” (progressives with conservative leanings) or “partial progressives” (conservatives with progressive leanings). For an example of a partial conservative, Lakoff asks us to take a look at Senator Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) (Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision, 15):

Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut [...] describes himself as a moderate. In fact, little about him is moderate. He doesn’t typically stake out middle-of-the-road positions on particular issues. Instead, his politics include both liberal and conservative positions, but on different issues. This makes him a biconceptual. His progressive worldview appears in his staunch support of environmental protection, abortion rights, and workers’ rights. His conservative worldview emerges in areas like his support of faith-based initiatives, school vouchers, and most notably, the current policy on Iraq. Because he tends to adopt progressive positions more often than conservative ones, we refer to him as a “partial conservative.”

Lakoff does describe four myths that bring about the idea of “centrists” or the misunderstanding of “moderates.” These are “the Label myth, the Linear myth, the Moderate myth, and the Mainstream myth” (Lakoff, Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision, 2006, 18). The “Label myth” is when people are asked to ascribe a label to themselves and “liberal” or “conservative” just do not fit. Thus, they
call themselves the middle option, typically “moderate.” The “Linear myth” works on the idea of the political scale, with liberal and conservative extremists on either end. Again, they are not extremists and thus must be “moderates.” The “Moderate myth” has been mentioned previously, and involves taking the “middle-of-the-road option.” Lakoff suggests that there are plenty of “yes-or-no” questions in politics that put this myth to bed. “Should there be a death penalty? You can’t kill someone only a little, or in moderation. Should abortion be legal? What does it mean to speak of someone having an abortion in moderation? Assisted suicide? What does moderation mean? … Drill [for oil] in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? Even “moderate” drilling is drilling. There is no in-between” (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 20). Finally, the “Mainstream myth” is based on poll results and assumes that there is a center in terms of public opinion.

Finally, Lakoff determines that it is through reaching biconceptuals that the conservatives have accomplished what they have in past elections (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 22):

> Political reality is far more complicated than any of these myths allow. The biconceptual “center” actually includes partial conservatives, partial progressives, and undecideds (biconceptuals in nonpolitical areas of life but with no fixed moral views governing their politics). Conservatives have understood the “center” in this way, and they understand that biconceptuals have both worldviews. By using conservative language, and repeating it over and over, they activate the deeper conservative value system, not only in their base but in partial conservatives as well. They also use antiliberal language, repeating it over and over to inhibit progressive values. Conservatives who use this strategy do not have to give up their values or their authenticity. All they have to do is talk to the center the same way they talk to their base.
Lakoff also courts the idea of “single-issue” voters. These are the people who vote for or against a candidate based solely on that candidate’s stance on a single issue. He contends that this only strengthens the idea of moral voting, since these single issues tend to be viewed as a more overarching religious or moral viewpoint (Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, 22):

*Examples include progressive Catholics voting for anti-abortion conservatives and progressive Jews seeing the Iraq war as being pro-Israel and voting for conservative Republicans on the war issue. On the other hand, ‘moral issue’ voters tend to support abortion or gay marriage because they support a strict father worldview.*
Chapter Three: Case Study: Illegal Immigration Legislation of 2007

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA) of 2007, S. 1348, was a hotly contested piece of legislation that died in the Senate during the 110th Congress. It was originally modeled after the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 (Sandler, “Reid Presses Immigration Rewrite Despite Lack of a Deal in Senate”), which had passed through the Senate in 2006, but did not make it into law before the end of the 109th Congress. The bill included increased “border security and enforcement proposals with a temporary-worker program and a path to legalization for millions of illegal immigrants” (Sandler, “Reid Presses Immigration Rewrite Despite Lack of a Deal in Senate”).

On May 11, 2007, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) set forth a deadline for two weeks of debate to begin on May 16. He also had plans for a cloture vote to occur on May 14. These tight deadlines were Reid’s way of moving the bill along quickly and pushing senators to work together to hammer out a bill acceptable to everyone (Sandler, “Reid Presses Immigration Rewrite Despite Lack of a Deal in Senate”). The cloture vote to consider the bill was postponed twice while a more agreeable immigration policy was being developed (Sandler, “Negotiators Agree on Immigration Plan”). On May 16, talks appeared to be dissolving, but eventually were
back on track. On May 17, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) announced a deal that had been worked out between leading members of the two parties (Sandler, “Negotiators Agree on Immigration Plan”). Senators Kennedy, Ken Salazar (D-Colo.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Cal.), Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.Ca.), Arlen Specter (R-Penn.), and Mel Martinez (R-Fl.) were those “leading the core group of senators who support the bill” (Sandler, “Immigration Overhaul Gains Ground in Senate”).

Members on both sides of the aisle expressed doubt about this bill, though. Democrats disliked the reduced emphasis on family reunification and increased focus on employer needs; there was also concern over a guest worker program that had no direct path to citizenship. Republicans, on the other hand, saw the bill as promoting amnesty for illegal aliens (Sandler, “Negotiators Agree on Immigration Plan”). The cloture vote to consider the bill was moved to May 21, when it passed 69-23. That same day, Senate Majority Leader Reid agreed to extend the time for debate on amendments to last until June 8 (Sandler, “Immigration Overhaul Gains Ground in Senate”).

Two amendments submitted by Byron Dorgan (D-N.Dak.) were defeated on May 22 and May 24, which would have terminated the guest worker program and dissolved the guest worker program after five years, respectively. An amendment by Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) was narrowly defeated that would have allowed federal, state, and local government officials to question individuals regarding their immigration status. Other amendments, though, were adopted, including a reduction in the annual number of work visas allowed, mandatory minimum sentences for deportees caught reentering the
U.S., and protection for undocumented children (Sandler, “Immigration Overhaul Gains Ground in Senate”).

Unfortunately for its supporters, a massive blow was dealt to the bill on June 7, when Senate Majority Leader Reid pushed for a cloture vote to limit debate on the bill and was thrice defeated. As a result, he pulled the bill from the floor and from further consideration (Sandler, “Reid Pulls Immigration Overhaul”). The adoption of two amendments was blamed for stagnating what momentum the bill had accumulated. The first of these was submitted by Senator Dorgan, and had previously been defeated on May 24. This amendment eliminated the guest worker program after five years. The other amendment was suggested by John Cornyn (R-Tex.) and removed “confidentiality protections … for illegal immigrants who were denied a Z visa,” which would put them on a path to citizenship (Sandler, “Reid Pulls Immigration Overhaul”). However, negotiations over amendments continued, though, and an endorsement by President Bush on June 12 aided in the revival of the bill on June 14 (Sandler & Kady, “Immigration Bill Gets Second Chance”). However, a fourth and final vote for cloture was rejected on June 28, killing the bill for good (Sandler, “Immigration Overhaul Stymied”), after all 27 considered amendments were combined into a single amendment, causing talks to break down and collapse.

In the House, a similar bill, H.R. 1645, the Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy (STRIVE) Act of 2007 was considered. The STRIVE Act was introduced on March 22, 2007, and was worked on and introduced by Representatives Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). Essentially, the bill went
nowhere fast. Following its introduction into the House agenda, it was referred to various committees (THOMAS), but these committees never reported any findings (GovTrack.us, 2007). Since a new session of Congress began before anything of substance occurred with this bill, it was cleared from the books. Eventually, the bill was broken apart and specific provisions of it found their way into the 2008 House Appropriations Bill (THOMAS).

The Messages in the Media

While all of this was happening, members of Congress on both sides of these bills appeared in the media with messages for their counterparts as well as for the American public. By examining their appearances in the media and applying what we know about media influence and Lakoff’s frames, we can hopefully see the underlying messages in their media appearances. In this section, we examine both print and television media from a variety of sources.

There exists a distinct message that appeared in examinations of senators’ media appearances when discussing this bill. Usually, when speaking to other senators, the tone of the message is one of how great the bill is and how hard those involved have worked for bipartisan compromise. Typically, they make references to the public and the public’s desire to see change in the near future for immigration reform. On May 17, a press conference was held with Senator Ted Kennedy and others who worked to craft the bill, delivered from the Senate Radio/TV Gallery. A press conference is a situation wherein the speaker has direct control over the message he or she presents. Kennedy is able to speak directly to his audience without being led by third party who may try to
alter or obscure his message. While he and others do take questions at the end of their press conference, they are free to end the questioning period. Should a question arise that challenges their message, they are able to simply say that they are done now and other questions can be directed to their press offices, which are more suited to craft an appropriate response to a difficult question. During this press conference, Senator Kennedy appealed to his colleagues in the Senate with phrases such as “[t]he American people are demanding a solution” and “the agreement we just reached is the best possible chance we will have in years to secure our borders…” With these phrases, Senator Kennedy is reminding the other senators that the people who will later vote for their reelection want to see immigration reform as well as assuring them that this is the best bill with which to garner the support of their constituents. Senator Kyl also spoke out to the Senate by using the same tactic as Senator Kennedy, as well as issuing a challenge by telling them to “either get in the game and … make it as good as you can, or … sit on the sideline and complain.” Conversely, Senator Dianne Feinstein spoke directly to the public, made abundantly clear by her words, “[t]o the American public I’d like to say, please, please, please … don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good.” This press conference would also be used in the following days as video clips and sound bites, another advantage of completely controlling the message (Kennedy & others).

On May 20, Senator Lindsey Graham spoke to his colleagues on Fox News Sunday, just before the first vote to limit debate on the bill. Like Senator Kyl, he issued a challenge to naysayers by stating, “to my colleagues who want to make the bill better, you’re welcome to come on the floor and let’s work together. To my colleagues who
come on the floor to tear down this bill with no alternative, you’re not doing this country a service, and I will push back.” He later stated outright, “[t]his is the best deal the Republican Party will get. This is the best deal the Democratic Party will get” (Graham, FOX News Sunday). Senator Graham later appeared on The Today Show on June 13, following President Bush’s endorsement of key points of the bill, again sending a message to his fellow senators. He stated that there was bipartisan support for this bill if it could only make it to the floor (Graham, The Today Show).

There were also appeals to the American public in interviews and press conferences, similar to Senator Feinstein’s. These typically took on a tone of reassurance (for supporters of the bill) or calls for outrage (for opponents of the bill). During an interview with ABC moderator George Stephanopoulos, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) mentioned that Senator Kyl, one of the main negotiators on the bill, was “certainly not perceived as anyone who is soft on the immigration issue” (McConnell). This was clearly meant to reassure the public, since those in the Senate would not need to be told how soft or hard Senator Kyl is on immigration. Later, on May 22, the New York Times reported Senator David Vitter (R-La.), a major opponent of the bill, as saying “[i]f the American people knew what was in this bill, there would be a massive outcry against it” (Pear & Luo, “Critics in Senate Vowing to Alter Immigration Bill”).

In the House, there were similar messages to both colleagues and constituents. On June 12, Representative Brian Bilbray (R-Ca.) appeared in an interview with Fox News moderator Neil Cavuto where he discussed how “the American people just do not
accept [amnesty]” (Bilbray, Your World with Neil Cavuto). On the same program, Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-Ca.) followed suit, claiming “[t]he American people have spoken time and again. And what they want to do is see the border secured first. Secure the border first. Then talk about other issues” (Blackburn). Both Representatives were speaking directly to their colleagues, informing them of what the American people, their constituents, wanted to see accomplished. Representative Bilbray appeared later, on June 28, in an interview on ABC’s The Big Story with John Gibson, again speaking to his colleagues. In this case, he was discussing the dead Senate bill, but he again discussed what he already knew the American public wanted (Bilbray, The Big Story with John Gibson). He went on to outline to his colleagues how to continue talks regarding immigration reform: “If they would drop the amnesty part we can sit down and talk … We need to talk about gaining some credibility and I think that’s the big problem” (Bilbray, The Big Story with John Gibson). During an interview with CNN moderator Lou Dobbs, Representative Ed Royce (R-Ca.) states, “If people understood what was in the bill, they would be opposed to this legislation. It will lead to insolvency. There is no way this great republic can afford this legislation. We have got to rally the House of Representatives to oppose this bill” (Royce). This was clearly a plea for the American people to disapprove of either bill, be it the House or Senate version.

By applying Lakoff’s frames to the media appearances of those involved in the support or opposition of the bill, we find quite a bit of biconceptual appeals on the whole. Of course, the message from many Democrats is one typical of a Nurturant Parent framework, and the message coming from the Republicans is just as typically Strict
Father. As a collective, though (and sometimes individually), the ultimate message is one of biconceptualism. This is not surprising, as the bill is a bipartisan effort.

In terms of Strict Father appeals, we can see these, not surprisingly, typically coming from Republican supporters and detractors. Senator Jon Kyl, for one, makes the case that one of the core principles of the bill is the reduction of familial ties on citizenship applications. Instead, there is an increase in emphasis of business and employer point systems (Kyl, Hannity & Colmes; Lou Dobbs Tonight). On CNN, Senator Kyl also mentions that the bill is “more restrictive than the bill that passed last year,” a value that is prominent in the Strict Father framework (Kyl, Lou Dobbs Tonight). On May 20, during an interview on Fox News Sunday, we see Senator Lindsey Graham invoking the Strict Father mentality when he mentions that “before 9/11, this was a social economic problem. After 9/11, this is a national security problem” (Graham, FOX News Sunday). Security and safety are higher concepts in the Strict Father morality than social issues. In addition, Senator Graham mentions that the guest worker program does not affect employers unless “no American will take the job and you have to advertise at a competitive wage” (Graham, FOX News Sunday). National identity and competition are both values of the Strict Father morality, and Senator Graham even manages to get them into the same sentence. Clearly he is invoking the Strict Father deep framework.

Representative Duncan Hunter, in his interview on Fox’s Your World with Neil Cavuto, calls upon the Strict Father values of security by making mention of a “strong national defense” multiple times and an “enforceable border,” even discussing the fence between America and Mexico (Hunter). On the aforementioned episode of Lou Dobbs Tonight on
CNN, an opponent of the bill, Representative Ed Royce (R-Ca.), also invoked the Strict Father frames though his repeated usage of the word “enforcement,” which places an emphasis on law and order, also prominent values of the Strict Father (Royce). The New York Times reports Republican Senator Jim Bunning also opposing the bill with the Strict Father values of law and order, saying “the bill would ‘reward lawbreakers’ with ‘a large-scale get-out-of-jail-free pass’” (Pear & Luo, “Critics in Senate Vowing to Alter Immigration Bill”). In another interview on Fox News, Republican Representatives Brian Bilbray and Marsha Blackburn both invoke Strict Father deep frames of law and order. Bilbray does so by contending that rewarding illegal immigrants with citizenship will not stop the illegal immigration (which is a crime). He also uses the word “enforcement” quite liberally (no pun intended), even saying at one point “let’s enforce employer enforcement” (Bilbray, Your World with Neil Cavuto). Blackburn stresses the importance of a secure border and strong law enforcement capabilities (Blackburn).

While these appeals to the Strict Father mentality were happening, there were also a number of Democrats using the media. These individuals tended to invoke the Nurturant Parent deep frames, as opposed to the Strict Father. One of the major topics on which we see this occurring is that of the family reunification portion of the bill. As early as May 14, before the bill was even brought to the floor, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) was interviewed on MSNBC, commenting on how the immigration bill should take into account family members that are citizens or residents of the United States (Menendez). Then-Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) also spoke about the importance of family reunification in the bill, only on May 18, once it had been shown that the bill
would place less concern on family members in the U.S. as opposed to the proposed point system (Weisman). The concept of unification of separated families is a Nurturant Parent value, as opposed to the Strict Father, where familial togetherness is not as highly valued. Senator Kennedy expresses this value as well on May 24, when he stated: “[L]egalization is important for the families. Do we think we’re going to deport children – 3.5 million American children who have parents that are undocumented?” (Pear, “Senate Votes to Keep Plan to Make Immigrants Legal”). Senator Hilary Clinton echoed these sentiments on June 4, saying, “We have a national interest in fostering strong families” (Hernandez). The other major contention that Democrats seemed to make was one of how the bill would lead to inequality, a certain bugaboo of the Nurturant Parent framework. While Senator Kennedy, on May 18, spoke of the “fair and basically humane” aspects of the bill (Kennedy, Good Morning America), Senator Reid and Representatives Jose Serrano (D-NY) and Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) saw it as leading to class inequality. “Mr. Reid said he feared that the bill would create ‘a permanent underclass of people who are here to work in low-wage low-skill jobs, but do not have a chance to put down roots or benefit from the opportunities of American citizenship’” (Pear & Luo, “Critics in Senate Vowing to Alter Immigration Bill”). Representative Serrano also spoke on this, stating that [a]ny time you set up a guest-worker program with no prospect for residency, you run the risk of creating an underclass of workers” (Hernandez). Notice the repetition of the word “underclass.” This word activates a negative deep frame of inequality in Nurturant Parent framework. Along the lines of equality, Representative Gutierrez said, “We need to find a system that values and honors the work of all. The landscaper is just as important as the computer scientist”
(Weisman). Gutierrez later appeared on “Meet the Press” and invoke even more Nurturant Parent frames. He twice used the words “humane” and “compassionate,” echoing sentiments earlier made by Senator Kennedy. He also related the story of a military specialist who went missing during a tour in Iraq and his wife, who was, at the time, being deported. He also activated Nurturant Parent deep frames by making an appeal for the humanity of immigrant workers (Gutierrez):

*Immigrants have contributed immensely to the fabric and the structure of our great American society, and they continue to do so today ... [T]he vast majority of immigrants who come here to this country come here to work hard, sweat, toil, and make our country a better place ... And Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the electorate. And let me just share with you, Pat, they’re not hordes to us. They sit in the pew with me at church on Sunday. Their children go to school with my children. We play in the same playgrounds. They’re an integral fabric of our community.*

Each of these groups was activating frames that exist primarily in their respective parties: Republicans tend to hold Strict Father frameworks, while Democrats tend toward Nurturant Parent frames. As previously explained, however, very few people are ruled solely by one or the other of these frameworks. Instead, most people are biconceptuals. That means that, in activating the frames they did, these Congressmen and women were attempting to reach out to a wider audience. Some members took this a step farther and actually broke from traditional party/familial morality associations or even spoke in a biconceptual manner, looking to reach the widest possible audience. Thus, we see Democrats like Senator Ted Kennedy speaking about family reunification in the same sentence as strengthening economy, which is typically a Strict Father principle (Kennedy & others). He is also quoted as saying, “This is a mix of strong borders, strong local law enforcement, and a sense of humanity and decency” (Kennedy, Good Morning America).
in addition to, “It’s a matter of our national security. We have broken borders and a
broken immigration system” (Pear, “Security is Focus of Bid to Revive Immigration
Bill”). We find Senator Menendez using strong, forceful words typical of a Strict Father
when he says, “[W]e need to know who is here in American pursuing the American
dream, versus who’s here to destroy it” (Menendez). We see similar language from
Representative Christopher Murphy (D-Conn.): “Realistically, we are going to have to
make a decision about who can stay and who we are going to force back to their country”
(Hernandez). The use of words “force” and “their” (in this context) seem Strict Father,
forceful and xenophobic. But the most Strict Father (and likely, most bicontceptual)
language found coming from a Democrat (and some Republicans) was that of Senator
Ken Salazar who spoke of securing borders, enforcing laws, and making special note that
immigrants must pay a fine, learn to speak English, and “live through a very long
probationary period” before being eligible for their green card “eight years on down the
road” (Kennedy & others). The Republicans also reached out to Nurturant Parents and
bicontceptuals, as well. We observe Senator Kyl on May 17, discussing a “pretty family-
friendly family reunification provision” in the bill on Fox News, of all places (Kyl,
Hannity & Colmes). We even see Senator Graham delivering the following to Meredith
Viera on The Today Show:

“This is a bill that’s a million percent better than the current system. I mentioned
working with Ted Kennedy and I got booed. The lady on your piece earlier said,
‘No compromise.’ I’m a Republican conservative who believes my country’s at
risk by not solving immigration. I’m a member of the United States Senate who
believes it’s my job to work with Democrats to do hard things. This is no longer
about immigration. Can your Congress, can your Senate come together to do
things that one party can’t do by itself? I think the answer is yes.”
Lakoff’s frames give us further insight into how these Senators are using the media to their advantage to spread their specific messages. By activating the frames they did, they were able to move the legislation along until its eventual stagnation.

The following table provides a compilation of the information previously discussed arranged by speakers and their comments into either activation of Strict Father or Nurturant Parent frames. Biconceptual messages, such as a Strict Father message coming from a typically Nurturant Parent source (or vice versa) or a message that activates both frameworks, are marked in bold. For each message, the speaker is listed along with the media outlet where the message was broadcast, and how the specific frame was activated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strict Father messages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker</strong></td>
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<td>Senator Jon Kyl</td>
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<td>Senator Lindsey Graham</td>
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<td>Speaker</td>
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<td>Senator Robert Menendez</td>
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<td>Senator Barack Obama</td>
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**Nurturant Parent messages**
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<tr>
<th>Senator Ted Kennedy</th>
<th>The New York Times</th>
<th>Familial support (lack thereof in bill)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Morning America, ABC</td>
<td>Equality (use of the word &quot;humane&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senator Hilary Clinton</td>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>Familial support (lack thereof in bill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Harry Reid</td>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>Equality (warning against creating an &quot;underclass&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Senator Jon Kyl</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hannity &amp; Colmes, FOX News</strong></td>
<td>Familial support (sufficient amount in bill)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senator Lindsey Graham</td>
<td>Today Show, NBC</td>
<td>Cooperation and working in a bipartisan manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. Jose Serrano</td>
<td>The Washington Post</td>
<td>Equality (warning against creating an &quot;underclass&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rep. Luis Gutierrez</td>
<td>The Washington Post</td>
<td>Equality (compares landscaper to computer scientist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet The Press, NBC</td>
<td>Equality (use of the words &quot;humane&quot; &amp; &quot;compassionate&quot;)</td>
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<td>Relates story involving soldier's wife being deported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasizes the humanity/normality of immigrants</td>
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Conclusion

What is it that we have learned by examining immigration reform in this particular way? How does the application of Lakoff’s frames and models show us something more than the typical analysis of policy discussion? This particular case study provides a context for the application of the model.

We find differences in the ways that the Senate and House communicate, for one. In the House of Representatives, we see that members of the opposing parties tend to stay on their own sides of the fence. Conversely, Senators appear to be more willing to use language supporting both sides of the debate. The conventional analysis would hold that this is because Senators must court constituents from the entire state. The diversity of constituents across the entire area of a state may vary greatly, which means that, to garner more support and more votes, and thus keep one’s job, a Senator must play the role of compromiser. In the House, generally, districts are much smaller and tend to contain much more homogenized constituencies. Thus, a Representative may be able to more easily stay on their preferred message, keeping their own partisan position.

One specific rhetorical example of how this situation plays out is in a closer examination of a word that was used frequently during the debate on these immigration
bills. This word is “amnesty.” According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the word “amnesty” is defined as “the act of an authority (as a government) by which pardon is granted to a large group of individuals.” This term dominates the discourse regarding the two immigration bills. Opponents and critics of the bill labeled the bills as a means of providing amnesty to the illegal immigrants in the country. It is not too difficult to discern why providing amnesty to illegal immigrants would upset those with a Strict Father framework. To come into the United States without going through the proper channels and procedures is illegal, meaning that a crime has been committed. The Strict Father strongly believes that actions have consequences; good actions are rewarded and bad or illegal actions are punished. Amnesty, though, in the mind of the Strict Father, rewards an illegal action, which is unacceptable and must be fought. As mentioned earlier, deep frames are created and reinforced by repetition. The repetition of “amnesty” by opponents of the bill helped to activate and reinforce a certain notion in Strict Father and biconceptual mentalities, namely that the bill (which rewarded an illegal action) was bad and not acceptable. At the same time, supporters of the bill appear in various media attempting to convince the public that the bill is not amnesty. However, by doing so, they are actually working against themselves. Every time that a supporter of the bill would state that the bill was not amnesty, they would be activating their viewers’ frame regarding amnesty. This would not present a problem for those with a dominant Nurturant Parent framework, or someone who viewed law and order through a Nurturant Parent lens. For all the Strict Fathers and biconceptuals with dominant Strict Father frames, though, bill supporters’ activation of the amnesty frame only reinforced it and impeded their own arguments.
It can be seen, then, how a movement toward bipartisanship is not a movement to biconceptualism. When Senators chose to use bipartisan language, they would simply be activating the frames already embedded in their audience’s mind. If these frames were not in line with the message the Senator was advocating, then the activation of those frames would only serve to strengthen the audience’s resolve against the message. The deep frames must already be in place in order to activate them to support the message. The amnesty argument is clear evidence of this. By not appreciating the difference between bipartisanship and biconceptualism, it is impossible to understand how people are persuaded and significantly reduces one’s ability to persuade as a result. It is not difficult to imagine the applications of this type of insight. For example, if the supporters of the 2007 immigration reform legislation had understood these concepts, they may have been more persuasive and the bills may have made it to President Bush’s desk, where they likely would have been signed into law.

This examination of the media and framing of messages advances our understanding of political communication. While here immigration reform in 2007 has been examined using Lakoff’s theories on familial models and biconceptualism, further work is needed along similar lines. In this thesis, these theories have only been applied to a single case study, and there are many, many more examples that could be examined. Other discussions of legislation in the media are an obvious extension of the material presented here. Another interesting extension might be an application of these theories to presidential campaigns. Here, one would be able to examine carefully crafted communication in the media, specifically designed to activate specific frames.
In understanding Lakoff’s frames and applying them, we are able to communicate and persuade more effectively. More importantly, we are able to analyze the underlying messages that exist in those who are attempting to communicate and persuade. We are more easily able to perceive “spin” and separate it from the facts of the matters at hand. On a deeper level, perhaps an understanding of the separate frameworks and how they combine into biconceptualism can move us away from such incendiary politics as exist today. Perhaps we are unable to narrow the schism between political ideologies, but in understanding how the other side not just sees things, but comprehends them, we may be able to bridge the gap and return to a more temperate form of discourse in American politics. Perhaps in understanding the nature of communication in politics, we can better understand the nature of politics itself, and by extension, government or even society as a whole.
Works Cited


