

to raise other questions for you.

My work on politics began when I asked myself just such a question. It was back in the fall of 1994. I was watching election speeches and reading the Republicans' "Contract with America." 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 a thought occurred to me. *I have exactly the opposite position on every issue. What do my positions have to do with one another?* And I could not figure that out either.

That was extremely embarrassing for someone who does cognitive science and linguistics.

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?

At this point I remembered a paper that one of my students had written some years back that showed that we all have a metaphor for the nation as a family. We have Founding Fathers. The Daughters of the American Revolution. We "send our sons" to war. This is a natural metaphor because we usually understand large social groups, like nations, in terms of small ones, like families or communities.

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