

How to Respond to Conservatives

The earlier chapters are meant to explain what framing is and how it works through language and communication systems, what conservative and progressive worldviews are, what biconceptualism is, and what the deep issues are in framing. But sooner or later, you are on the front line called the dinner table. As my students regularly ask, “Thanksgiving is coming and I’m going to be eating dinner with my conservative relatives, and I am going to get in a row over politics with my grandfather or my aunt. It’s always painful. What can I do?”

The following is a letter I received in 2004 while writing the version of this chapter in the first edition. It arrived several days after I had appeared on a TV show, *NOW with Bill Moyers*.

I listened to Dr. Lakoff last Friday night on *NOW* with great interest. I love the use of words and have been consistently puzzled at how the far right has co-opted so many definitions.

So I tried an experiment I wanted to tell you about. I took several examples from the interview; particularly trial vs. public protection lawyer and gay marriage and used those examples all week on AOL’s political chat room. Every time someone would scream about [John] Edwards’s being a trial lawyer, I’d respond with public protection lawyer and how they are the last defense against negligent corporations and [are] professional, and that the opposite of a public