Washington: The Real No-Spin Zone

Jeffrey M. Berry
Tufts University
jeffrey.berry@tufts.edu

Frank R. Baumgartner
Penn State University
frankb@psu.edu

Marie Hojnacki
Penn State University
marieh@psu.edu

David C. Kimball
University of Missouri, St. Louis
dkimball@umsl.edu

Beth L. Leech
Rutgers University
leech@polisci.rutgers.edu

Abstract

A broad and enduring belief holds that strategic politicians are often able to *reframe* issues when existing issue definitions are working to their disadvantage. Both scholars and journalists have written extensively about the process by which clever advocates push new frames that alter the way in which an issue is understood. The best known example of this is the reframing of late term abortions as "partial birth abortions." We test this basic proposition, drawing on a large-scale study of Washington policymaking. Specifically, we utilize more than 300 interviews conducted for 98 separate cases to measure the frequency of reframing. We monitored these 98 issues over time from our initial interviews to a follow-up interview 18-24 months later. Our conclusion is that full or partial reframing is exceedingly rare. Three broad lines of reasoning provide a framework for understanding why reframing is so uncommon. In turn we discuss explanations relating to resources, political realities, and beliefs. We conclude by arguing that initial frames tend to be stable and over time debate revolves around the core, not the surface of issues.

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Speaking in support of a proposed a constitutional amendment banning gay marriages, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) argued that the underlying question was the need to protect children.[*] Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), who opposed the amendment, rebutted Cornyn declaring the issue was clearly one of states' rights. Surprisingly, perhaps, neither focused on the surface issue, whether gays and lesbians should have the legal right to marry.[1] It's not that Cornyn and Leahy were trying to hide the basic conflict over gay marriage; everyone knew what the debate concerned. Rather, they each thought it advantageous if the nation viewed the issue through the prism that they offered. Knowing that public opinion stood against gay marriage, Leahy believed that it was strategic to try to shift debate to states' rights, an enduring principle of federalism traditionally championed by conservatives. For his part, Cornyn thought that it would be more appealing for conservatives to be seen as protecting children rather than trying to crack down on an oppressed minority.

Social scientists refer to this process as "framing." Framing can be thought of as a competition among perspectives describing the same underlying phenomenon. Both Cornyn and Leahy were talking about the identical constitutional amendment, but each wanted the public to give greater weight to one of the considerations that related to the fundamental issue.[2] Frames are no small matter. In the words of Donald Kinder and Thomas Nelson, frames "live inside the mind; they are cognitive structures that help citizens make sense of politics. . . Frames provide order and meaning, making the world beyond direct experience seem natural."[3]

The emergence of a new frame, what we'll refer to as "reframing," can sharply alter public perception of an issue. Conservatives' aim in promoting the term "partial birth abortion" was to make people understand exactly what happens during a late-term abortion. The term evokes a gruesome image: A fetus moving down the birth canal, only to have its life brutally terminated by a physician. Virtually all Americans find this upsetting, and no one needs specialized medical training to have an opinion about the matter when it is presented in these terms. Standing in stark contrast is the technical term, "intact dilation and extraction," which conjures up a medical procedure about which most people would have no opinion and which would imply that perhaps only those with medical training should be making these decisions. "Partial birth abortion" is not merely more evocative, but it pushes people to think of the larger issue in a particular way. For anti-abortion activists, gaining acceptance of their frame was a brilliant tactical victory in this ongoing and bitter conflict. Those who defend a women's right to choose lost that skirmish in the framing wars, and have never succeeded in reestablishing the widespread use of a more neutral term. This example surely supports George Lakoff's contention that "reframing *is* social change."[4]

Several things are clear. One is that framing can have huge impacts on policy outcomes. Second is that particular issues are often associated with dramatically different frames. Third, it is easy to point to individual cases, such as "partial birth abortion," where a given debate has indeed been redefined. Finally, we know that lobbyists and political leaders of all kinds *attempt* to reframe issues all the time—they are masters of spin.

Still, there is much we don't know about framing and reframing. Most importantly, we know very little about the ability of individuals or organizations to affect frames. Can lobbyists or government officials reframe at will? If such an attempt is made, don't the opponents fight back? Are there particular conditions that make reframing more or less likely? Are there structures or institutions that affect this process, limiting the ability of actors to reframe things at will? And how does framing relate to partisanship? One goal of this research was to utilize the case studies, the interviews with advocates, and a comparison of arguments used at the time of the initial interviews with those used in the follow-up research, to try to answer some of these questions.

Strategic Politicians

The belief that framing is central to modern politics is grounded in both scholarship and in the conventional wisdom that underlies contemporary journalism. We turn here first to scholarship and then discuss journalism in the section that follows. The study of framing is no small academic niche, but rather has attracted attention from researchers across the social sciences, including social psychologists, economists, and political scientists. At a very basic level laboratory experiments have demonstrated unequivocally that subjects can be influenced in their opinions by framing effects. In one simple experiment, for example, subjects were given information on the risks of two alternative treatments for lung cancer, surgery or radiation. One group was told that out of 100 surgeries, 68 people are alive at the end of the first year. For the alternative, radiation therapy, 77 are alive at the end of the first year. Another group is told that out of 100 surgeries, 32 die by the end of the first year. For radiation, this same group is told that 23 die after the first year. Odds at the end of five years were similarly expressed.

Even though both groups receive the exact same statistical odds for both treatments, many more in the second group opt for radiation. Apparently, people judge risks differently when they are expressed in terms relating to the chances of dying rather than to the chances of living.[5]

Recent research has focused on identifying the conditions under which framing is most likely to succeed or fail. For example, James Druckman found that the credibility of the source of information has a significant impact on the chances for successful framing.[6] Consider the credibility conferred by post-9 /11 stories on Iraq in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Although President Bush's own standing was high at that point, those papers' tacit support of his contention that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction burnished the credibility of the few fragments of flimsy evidence concerning WMD that the administration put forward. Both papers would later issue unprecedented public apologies for their failure to examine critically the claims made by the administration. Nevertheless, at the time Bush was framing a proposed invasion of Iraq as an appropriate and necessary response to worldwide terrorism, the papers' acceptance of the case he put forth was crucial. The Bush administration's reliance on Secretary of State Colin Powell, who presented his devastating indictment of Saddam's ostensible weapons program at the United Nations General Assembly, was not coincidental. Secretary Powell had enormous personal credibility, much greater than others within the administration more personally connected with the hard-line stance on Iraq. Source credibility matters, and Powell had great credibility.

William Riker's pioneering analysis of framing claims that argumentation is far more than the art of rhetoric. Rather, framing considerations are critical to the strategy of

advocacy. He calls this process *heresthetics*—a neologism so awful it gives jargon a bad name.[7] Whatever the label, Riker called attention to a little appreciated aspect of political life, especially in the context of legislative policymaking. In his slender classic, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, he offers readers a dozen cases where clever tacticians successfully reframed an issue. In one of these cases Riker recounts the efforts of Senator Warren Magnuson (D-WA) to stop the shipment of nerve gas from Okinawa to the United States. The gas was initially to be shipped through Seattle, but even when the Pentagon abandoned that idea, Magnuson kept fighting to make sure the gas never got anywhere near the Northwest. As the issue developed the savvy, experienced Magnuson recognized that he did not have the votes to kill the revised plan on its merits (no matter where the gas was to be transported, there would be far more Senators pleased that their state or region had been spared than upset that their area had been targeted). He then switched from an argument about the inherent dangers of nerve gas to one instead focused on senatorial prerogatives. His new argument claimed that the Nixon administration had ignored a previously passed resolution requiring the President to consult with the Senate on both issues relating to Okinawa and to the existing peace treaty with Japan. Magnuson implored his colleagues to stand up for their institution and to send the President a message about his need to consult with them. After closely examining the vote on some cognate issues, Riker concluded that Magnuson's introduction of a new frame won over enough votes to ban the shipment of the Okinawa nerve gas into the United States.[8]

Riker describes heresthetics as "structuring the world so you can win."[9] In his mind such strategic efforts are common as legislators and other policymakers constantly

rework their arguments to introduce new dimensions. Riker says that "accomplished herestheticians maneuver every day as part of their ordinary business."[10] This is very much a Madison Avenue view of human nature: Even policymakers can be sold an old product repackaged as new. Riker does not deny the importance of partisanship or ideology, but encourages readers not to consider decisionmaking as a static set of choices dictated by standing positions or cleavages. In fact, the cleavages themselves are not fixed—each issue relates to many different dimensions, and each of those may divide voters along a different cleavage, creating a majority on some dimensions but not on others. Determining what the fight is going to be about—setting the terms of the debate—has long been recognized by both practitioners and theorists alike as fundamental to determining the outcome of a legislative vote, a debate, or an election.[11]

It is important to distinguish Riker's argument about the manipulation of arguments and issue frames with real-world changes in the external environment. Riker focused on alternative frames for an otherwise stable issue. It is a somewhat different situation when outside events alter the underlying issue. At any given time the salience of an issue can rise or fall for reasons having little to do with the frames advocates are using in their effort to gain support. Bryan Jones uses the example of a proposal to build a superconducting supercollider, which was endorsed by the House of Representatives in 1991. A year later the same body of legislators turned around and voted against the supercollider. What had changed in the intervening year was that national concern over the budget deficit grew. As Jones explains, the underlying preferences of legislators didn't change, but the national environment led a number of Representatives to pay more attention to the budget implications of building the expensive supercollider. In short,

what happened outside the House of Representatives enabled opponents of the project to utilize a budgetary frame with more effectiveness.[12]

John Kingdon offers a related perspective. Kingdon views Washington policymakers as entrepreneurs, all armed with proposals they want enacted. A policymaker might push a policy change for years without success, but still does whatever she can to keep the proposal alive. Periodically, however, policy windows open and policymakers "must be prepared, their pet proposal at the ready, their special problem well-documented, lest the opportunity pass them by."[13] When gasoline prices soared in 2006, liberals in Congress went after tax benefits enjoyed by domestic oil companies. They had long fought such tax breaks, but the sudden opening of this window gave them an opportunity to recycle their familiar arguments about excessive generosity toward the highly profitable energy sector. Some modest legislative victories followed for the liberals.

Scholarship has thus concentrated on two related but still distinct dynamics. In some cases a new dimension is introduced by advocates to try to reframe an otherwise unchanged, underlying condition. In other instances events have altered the underlying issue or the surrounding policymaking environment, and advocates use the opportunity to try to frame the new reality. In both cases, either working alone or by taking advantage of windows of opportunity opened by some outside event, policy entrepreneurs inside and outside of government sometimes succeed in their efforts to reframe debates.

Shadow or Substance?

Those who follow politics closely might scratch their heads at this literature, wondering about the value of research seemingly designed to document the obvious: that

politicians and their press aides constantly try to shape stories. Is "heresthetician" anything more than academese for "spin doctor"? These terms are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. It's not often that serious academic research has a journalistic analog, but framing surely qualifies as just such a case.

Journalists are not late to this game. Joe McGinniss's *The Selling of the President 1968* was an early expose of those who try to shape the news and coverage of politics has ever since been sensitive to the efforts of spinmeisters.[14] The common knowledge that all sides do it does little to reduce the efforts of spinners to spin and journalists to identify spin for what it is. Sometimes the effort to spin the story is the story itself. In a *New York Times* article about the Bush administration's Medicare drug benefit plan, reporter Robert Pear wrote not of the program's actual performance, but of the efforts of the two parties to spin their version of reality. Pear lampooned Republicans because they "manipulated enrollment figures" and ridiculed Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi for her hyperbole in claiming the law wasn't working because "a Republican culture of corruption has infected our government."[15]

The norms that direct journalists to be wary of spin, the spoon-feeding of information shaded to frame a story toward a particular perspective, are now well entrenched in the profession. Journalists must also try to understand the broader efforts of large-scale campaigns that extend far beyond a single story. Typical is of this genre is Bob Thompson's article in the *Washington Post*, dissecting the marketing analysis that led conservatives to use the term "death tax" instead of the conventional "estate tax." Use of the term "death tax" was shown by a party pollster to generate greater anger

among voters, convincing Republican lawmakers and lobbyists to change their vocabulary.[16]

The behind-the-scenes stories focusing on the strategizing and mechanics of political spin machines offer valuable insight into modern politics. At the same time a steady diet of critical newspaper and magazine articles can easily lead citizens to the conclusion that politics is shallow and susceptible to the basest manipulation.[17] For whatever level of cynicism is truly warranted, it's important to recognize that the frames that are spun are often connected to powerful, central ideas about the nature of government. The problem with both the academic and journalistic literature on this topic is that we have no baseline. That is, we can point to examples of successful reframing or spinning, but we have no idea if these represent one percent, 50 percent, or 99 percent of what takes place on a typical day in Washington. If spin were all that mattered, there would be no structure to politics. If underlying structures were the whole picture, then there would be no spin. We need to pin down some basic points of comparison. How common is successful spinning?

Consider, for example, four major endeavors to frame broad-scale policy change: the Republican Contract with America, the Clinton health care proposal, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the Bush proposal to create private Social Security accounts. Each was accompanied by a major public relations campaign emphasizing a new frame that was a bold departure from the prevailing conventional wisdom. In the wake of the Republicans' landslide in the 1994 House elections, the new Speaker, Newt Gingrich, claimed that the voters had knowingly endorsed the Contract with America, ten broad policy planks supported by 300 of the Republican candidates for Congress that year. Even though polls

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showed only a small minority of the population knew of the Contract prior to the election, the frame offered by Gingrich and the Republicans' claiming an electoral mandate for this set of policies gained widespread acceptance. President Clinton proposed a revolutionary new health care system, managed competition, arguing that the existing system was broken and inefficient. The Republicans beat back this effort by emphasizing a familiar frame: that the government is too inefficient to be entrusted with health care.[18] The Bush administration's spinning of the need to invade Iraq is best symbolized by his Chief of Staff's explanation of why they waited until the fall of 2002 to push a war against Iraq: "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August."[19] Bush's push for a new Social Security system was launched with an effort to convince Americans that there was a crisis in the system, one so urgent that it demanded immediate attention. Ironically, as the proposal began to sink the White House scrambled to try to alter the frame that it had helped to develop: that the President wanted to "privatize" the system. The public reacted quite negatively to the idea that Social Security would be privatized. The White House's switch in terminology to "personal" accounts from "private" accounts never gained traction.

These four massive framing efforts all involved the most fundamental of principles about the role of government, and all mobilized the nation's top leadership, including the President, armed with that most powerful of spin machines, the bully pulpit. All but the invasion of Iraq centered on appropriate scope of government, the most basic of all differences between liberals and conservatives. The proposed war against Iraq forced citizens to consider the use of American military power in a world where terrorism presents a much greater threat than conventional warfare. For all the spinning on these

issues, the frames pushed by advocates and opponents put a basic idea about government front and center. For all the egregious simplicity of the most basic arguments used by advocates, in one way or another those arguments raised the most fundamental theoretical issues at the heart of political science. Should we have a responsible party system? To what degree is government responsible for those who can't take care of themselves? What is more important, freedom or equality? Should America use its power to promote democracy in other countries? The manifestations of these debates, these contentious ideas, are the policies that affect people's lives.

No one disputes that ideas in the political world have real-world impact. What should be emphasized, though, is that framing of public policy proposals is typically designed to prime a broader political or ideological position. As Jacobs and Shapiro note, "A priming approach concentrates on raising the priority and the weight that individuals assign to particular attitudes already stored in their memories."[20] But priming is challenging as the messages sent must break through the clutter of all the other messages that bombard us on an average day. And priming can easily stimulate opponents to launch their own efforts at persuasion.

<u>Soaking and Poking in Washington</u>

What is evoked by a particular effort at framing may disturb those on one side of a divide while pleasing others. What is used to prime may be false or misleading, as was President's Bush's claims about why it was necessary to invade Iraq. Frames can be used to stigmatize groups of people as undeserving of government assistance.[21] During the heated debate over immigration reform in 2007, some of the critics of the bipartisan

legislation argued that illegal immigrants brought infectious diseases from their home countries into the United States.

Even if they are not purposefully misleading, frames are almost always, by definition, partial; they never tell the whole story, so the question is which part of the story does one prefer to put out there for public discussion. Although it is evident that frames can be of great consequence, what is less certain is how often the introduction of a new frame matters. It could be that cases where the emergence of a new frame succeeds, like the partial birth abortion frame, are relatively uncommon. Also plausible is that initial perspectives that characterize an issue are typically rather durable, altered only incrementally over time if at all. Another possibility is that frames change in response to things that are beyond the control of any single actor; these policy advocates may attempt to take advantage of them if they occur, as Kingdon described, but they cannot make them happen. And even if issues are reframed because of the rhetorical skills of individual policy entrepreneurs or because of surprise events beyond the control of any single actor, we still know very little about how often this occurs.

The data that we use to investigate the arguments and tactics that advocates employ have been collected as part of a broad, collaborative research project on advocacy and public policymaking. The primary data being collected for the project comes from more than 300 interviews with Washington, DC-based policy advocates (e.g., representatives of organized interests, congressional staff, agency personnel) active on 98 randomly selected policy issues.

Although this research project is enormous in scale and involves many complex coding schemes, what we actually did in the field is relatively simple in its structure. We

began by drawing a random sample of interest groups active in Washington from the reports that lobbying organizations file with the House and Senate.[22] The sample was weighted so that the more specific issues a group listed in its reports, the more chance it had of being selected. (The details of this and all other aspects of our methodology can be found at our project web site at http://lobby.la.psu.edu.) We then made an appointment with an individual lobbyist at these organizations and this set of advocates then served as our *issue identifiers*. During the interviews, the issue identifier was asked to discuss the most recent issue he or she had spent time on, to describe what they had done and what the organization was trying to accomplish on the issue.

For the purposes of this paper it's important to stress that this issue did not have to be something that was actively being considered by Congress or an agency. That is, the issues did not have to be part of the agenda of a government institution. Indeed, a fair number of issues we heard about were problems that advocates were trying to gain attention for as a step toward actually getting them on the agenda. On the periphery of the agenda we heard about such issues as increasing the Medicare reimbursement rate for pap screenings, the commercial trade of bear organs, and a worker compensation matter that revolved around the respective definitions of "boat" and "ship." On the other end of the spectrum were issues that ignited major conflicts and were well covered by the press. These included the granting of Most Favored Nation trading status to China, a sweeping set of new ergonomics regulations, and bankruptcy reform. The vast majority of our issues fell in-between the cataclysmic and the obscure.

This wide variety of issues was the result of utilizing a random sample. Most studies of issue framing select out a single issue to analyze, or maybe a few.

Alternatively, research is built around a lab experiment with a limited number of manipulated variations on the same issue. As Druckman points out, selecting cases is dangerous because "nearly every time scholars look for a framing effect, they tend to find it."[23]

The initial question asking what the lobbyist was working on usually yielded a long and rich description of the issue and the organization's attempts to push its views forward. Although it usually arose during this phase of the interview, we made sure to ask about the arguments the lobbyists were using to push their case forward. If it wasn't volunteered we asked, "What's the fundamental argument you use to try to convince people to do this?" Our probe notes in the interview template ensured that we would follow up if we were not told if different arguments were used for different targets. If needed, we would also ask what the secondary arguments were, and whether the lobbyists detected partisan differences in the responses they received. If not volunteered, we asked each interviewee about the arguments made by those who opposed them.

As part of the initial interview we gained information about who else was active on the issue. We used this snowball technique to identify additional subjects, both in other interest groups (including opposition organizations) and in government, who were viewed by our respondents as being central actors in the policy dispute. We proceeded to arrange interviews with some of the other principals involved in each case, placing a priority on meeting with opposition organizations if there was identifiable opposition and with any officials or organizations identified as having different policy priorities than the organization that had already been interviewed. These additional interviews often generated more names of potential contacts. Government sources were typically

congressional committee staffers, personal staff in congressional offices who specialized in the issue in question, or mid- to high-level agency officials. Overall, we interviewed 315 subjects or an average of a little over three sources per case. The interviews were supplemented by a comprehensive document search and a systematic review of media coverage through the LexisNexis database.

A key to our research for analysis of framing, as well as for other parts of the study, is that 18 to 24 months after our original research we went back to one of the interview subjects for each case and reinterviewed them. Unlike the initial round of interviews in the subjects' offices, these follow-up interviews were done over the phone and were designed to focus on what had changed concerning the issue since we had talked about it previously in Washington. In these follow-up interviews we mentioned the primary argument that the subject had identified when we met in Washington and then asked if that was still the primary argument being utilized. We also asked about any new arguments in the mix, either introduced by them or by other advocates. If the subject said she had been pushing a new primary argument, we asked why such a change was made. We also asked interviewees to evaluate their progress on the issue.

Our in-person interviews lasted an average of a little over an hour each. In classic elite interviewing style, we used a small number of open-ended questions to allow respondents to identify what they regarded as important; in return we gained richly detailed responses rather than short, highly factual ones.[24] As indicated above, we also used probes to elicit the necessary information when the respondent failed to include some of what we needed in an answer. Entering an interview our intent was to create a comfortable atmosphere and to nurture a conversational tone rather than one where we

fired questions and the respondent fielded them the best he could. Looking back we're confident that we achieved our goals as the highly detailed interview transcripts provided an enormous amount of information for us to process.

Stable Frames

Let us emphasize as strong as we can that ours is only an analysis of *reframing*. Both social scientists and journalists are guilty of using the terms *framing* and *reframing* interchangeably. Often the term framing is used when the more appropriate term would be reframing. The research design for this study did not allow for an analysis of initial framing since our random sample was comprised of the issues lobbyists were working on the very week we interviewed them. Although some of the lobbyists were trying to push issues on the periphery forward, they mostly identified issues that were already far along in the legislative process. Overall, a significant proportion of the sample of issues related to long-term problems. Yet to study initial framing requires observations at the beginning and the true beginning of an issue is difficult to fix. To try to locate the origins of an issue is to get caught in a web of "infinite regress." As John Kingdon writes, "An idea doesn't start with the proximate source. It has a history."[25]

In reviewing each of the 98 cases, coding revolved around a simple question: over the time we followed each issue, did a new frame emerge by stage two of the research. (The second stage, the time when we followed up on the original interviewing, generally took place in the second half of the next Congress.) Each issue was coded as being characterized by stable framing, partial reframing, or complete reframing. A complete reframing was defined as the emergence of a new, dominant frame that reoriented debate over an issue. A partial reframing means that a new frame altered the fundamental debate

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but that it did not become a dominant perspective. In practical terms this would reflect a new argument coming to the fore, joining the mix of other arguments that remained viable. An issue coded as being characterized by a stable frame indicated that the issue was still being debated in the same general terms as it was when we first interviewed participants. Our coding decisions were guided by comparing the original interviews with a follow-up interview during the next Congress, reviews of stories in the media, and any other pertinent information that we came across during the time we studied the issue.

The results are stunning. Of the 98 issues that fell into our sample, just 4 issues were judged to have undergone some degree of reframing over the period studied. In three cases there was a partial reframing. This is just 4 percent. (If issues that appeared to have reached a conclusive termination point at the time of the initial interviews are removed from the calculation, it is 4 issues out 85, or 5 percent.[26]) One example of partial reframing came at the end of the Clinton administration when the Forest Service issued regulations banning further road building in the national forests. Proponents of the ban argued that the environmental degradation that came from the roads and the lack of funds to maintain existing roads dictated putting a stop to additional road building. Opponents from the timber industry were concerned about limiting access for logging. After it took office the Bush administration was faced with a set of regulations it did not like, but believed the law constrained it from simply tossing out the Clinton rules. Instead, Bush administration officials fashioned a new policy that offered local control so that officials at each site could determine what was best at that location.[27] The competing frames were not pushed aside, but this local control perspective was successfully added to the mix by the administration.

In another case of partial reframing, a bankruptcy bill was tied up when Republicans hostile to abortion put in a provision exempting anti-abortion groups from civil claims that were the product of protests of violence at abortion clinics. The virulently anti-abortion group, Operation Rescue, declared bankruptcy rather than pay restitution to abortion clinics. Senate Republicans sympathetic to the anti-abortion movement believed that as a matter of conscience, such groups as Operation Rescue should not be required to distribute their assets to Planned Parenthood or other pro-choice organization. The third case of partial reframing involved Internet taxation, or more accurately, the lack of taxation on items purchased over the Internet. Initially the debate was argued on the basis of no new taxes vs. the need for revenue by cities and states who were losing revenue as consumers moved some of their purchases to Internet providers. A new argument came into play as so-called "bricks and mortar" stores began to emphasize fairness to all businesses. An identical product found both online and at a store at the mall can be sold more cheaply by the Internet supplier because no sales tax need be assessed. As one lobbyist working for a national retail chain put it, "All channels of commerce should be tax neutral. The government should not be in the business of picking winners and losers."

The one issue undergoing a complete reframing was a minor matter concerning the excise tax on telephone bills. The tax actually goes back to the time of the Spanish-American War and was justified as a luxury tax since only the upper class had phones at that time. At the beginning of our research phone companies were pushing Congress to eliminate the tax. At a later point in time, when the case was updated, the declining economy had effectively killed the proposal. Deteriorating economic conditions made

legislators reluctant to give up the $5 billion a year the tax generated. This was a new perspective and one that dominated what little discussion there was on the issue at the time of the follow-up research. (After this legislative defeat, advocacy turned to the courts and in a series of decisions, the application of this tax to long-distance phone calls was invalidated.)

Why is reframing so uncommon? Nothing in the literature offers an estimate of just how frequently reframing occurs, but that work certainly implies that it happens at a level of frequency that is above unusual or rare. Although there is work which is cautionary, citing barriers to reframing, the literature as a whole clearly suggests that reframing is a common strategy and sometimes succeeds.[28] It's not clear from the data gathered here as to how often reframing is tried, but our judgment is that when it is attempted it is aimed at a partial reframing and not at a wholesale reorientation.

The denizens of Washington continue to believe that reframing works but not because they've read William Riker or any of the other scholars who have written on this subject. Rather, a central part of the culture of Washington is spin. Spin and reframing are certainly overlapping concepts but in colloquial language spin usually refers to immediate and more transitory contexts—in particular the story being written that day by journalists. Nevertheless, spinning and public relations are so much a part of the day-to-day life of Washington, that it's easy to assume that reframing, efforts aimed at more enduring change in the way an issue is perceived over the next policymaking cycle, is often successful. Also, recent party history is often linked to success at such public relations skills. The triumph of conservatives and Republicans' success since the 1994 congressional elections has been widely attributed in large part to abilities to package

their policies in an appealing and benign veneer.[29] Conversely, liberals are excoriated for their inability to match the conservatives' abilities on this score. Lakoff for example, argues stridently that the liberals' problems are not with their basic policies but with the way they're presented to the American people.[30]

We believe that our finding that reframing is rare is correct not only because we used a random sample instead of selecting out cases, but also because our interviews with advocates left us with an indelible impression as to just how difficult reframing is. In talking to lobbyists, legislative aides, and administrators, we observed people with little, if any, control over the definition of the problem at hand.

In looking back at the sample of cases, many obstacles to reframing become evident. We group these explanations into three general categories: resources, political realities, and beliefs.

<div align="center">Resources</div>

The fights over public policy are not contests of ideas alone, but of resources as well. Analysis focuses here on resources related to the opposition, sunk costs, and coalitions. The most fundamental reason why reframing is difficult is that the advocates who want to reframe will very likely run into an *opposition side* that will fight any effort contrary to its interests. For example, on the issue of CAFE standards (which set miles per gallon thresholds for automobile manufacturers), both sides on this issue have substantial resources and many friends in Congress. Environmental organizations and auto manufacturers are both well represented in Washington and are savvy, aggressive lobbies. In our interviews on this case we observed lobbyists fully engaged in watching the opposition's every move. Each lobbyist we spoke with went into enormous detail

about the other side's arguments—we couldn't shut them up. Neither side is going to sit idly by and let the other redefine the issue without a concerted attempt to push such efforts off to the side.

The ability of the opposition to effectively combat redefinitions is aided by the slow gears of Washington's policymaking machinery. Redefinition efforts are not tactical strikes but part of long-term strategy. Thus, opponents can't be caught off guard by an overnight sneak attack, as might happen with a new sweetener to be proposed as an amendment just for a floor vote.

A second resource-related constraint on reframing is *sunk costs*. Here we refer to tangible costs only, excluding psychological commitment, which we take up below. The arguments put forward by interest groups are more than the rhetoric of conversations or the theme in a memo left in a congressman's office. Those arguments reflect an investment by an interest group or government office in supporting that line of advocacy. People working for interest groups are assigned to work on a particular problem from a particular perspective. Individuals may even be hired for the expertise on a specific aspect of a policy problem.

Over the years lobbyists and executives from Lockheed Martin have continued to argue as hard as they can that the C-130 transport plane is vital to the nation's defense. There is, of course, fierce competition for weapons purchases from the Pentagon and the C-130 is not cheap. Nor is it sexy as it lugs cargo around rather than attacking the enemy and, weapons-wise, it is an aging senior citizen dating all the way back to the Korean War. It is not as though Lockheed Martin would refuse to use other arguments to try to promote the plane but it's hard to imagine that anything would be as strong as arguments

about the plane's success, functionality, and cost-effectiveness. The Lockheed Martin office in Washington works continually to develop evidence to support this basic story line. Every budget iteration requires that its lobbyists go forward with data to support the enduring arguments about the C-130.

The third and final resource constraint is participation in *coalitions*. Interest group coalitions are ubiquitous in Washington and given the limited room on the congressional agenda and opposition from other interest groups, lobbies are eager to find allies to fight along side of. But with allies come compromises and reduced autonomy. Although a coalition isn't limited to a single argument that all participants must parrot, it makes sense for coalitions to coordinate their message. Significant changes from that message may need to be negotiated. Since politics can make for strange bedfellows, some arguments may be tempered to keep opponents on other issues civil, if not friendly, on the matter at hand. One of our issues, regulations designed to reduce the sulfur content of gasoline found environmental groups and car manufacturers on the same side. They're usually opponents but the environmentalists surely had to agree to arguments that avoided their differences of opinion with auto manufacturers on other clean air issues. As one lobbyist told us, his coalition was "not this huge lockstep no-cracks phalanx." But he added, "there is an interest on our part in how we develop better relationships" with other groups, even those his organization is sometimes at "loggerheads" with.

The subject of coalitions suggests a broader point. Interest groups operate in a community of organizations that they commonly work with. While coalitions of strange bedfellows are always striking, most coalition partners, most of the time, are like-minded organizations. Thus, one community of advocates typically monitors another community

of advocates.[31] These policy communities are communication networks and the regular interaction of advocates with their regular partners facilitates quick strategizing and mobilization. This multiplicity of actors and the resources they aggregate in policy communities makes it all the more difficult for one set of participants to quickly or dramatically change the terms of debate. Thus, the very structure of issue networks supports the stability of frames over time.

<div align="center">Political Realities</div>

For many issues at some times or all times, trying to reframe an issue is a waste of time and resources. Given the difficulty of reframing under the best of circumstances, members of the Washington community will think long and hard about the political realities of such an effort. Our time spent with lobbyists and policymakers led us to reflect on three types of political realities that can deter reframing: political alignments, ripeness, and media norms.

By *political alignments* we refer to those who are in power and those who are in the minority. It is always the case that for some interests in Washington, the wrong people are in power and for all practical purposes, those interests need to wait until an election brings change. One lobbyist told us that he's always asking "what's the climate like?" and "is the climate going to change?" These may seem like obvious questions, but they're ones that bears thinking about in the context of reframing. A lobby, even as wealthy as some are, must rationally allocate its resources. In plain English, each lobby must put its money and staff where they are going to do the most good. And contrary to popular misconception, most lobbies in Washington are constrained by budgets and staffing limitations.

If the wrong people come to power, lobbies may rethink the arguments they've been presenting. In some instances a new argument might be a good idea. If the conservatives are in power, for example, an environmental group might want to shift argumentation toward market-based reasons, if there are any, for a particular goal. But even so, it is more likely that the disadvantaged group is instituting a change in emphasis than trying to reframe. Other counterstrategies may be considered, such as looking for a legislative trade where allies in Congress logroll with the opposition, giving up something to gain something. But similarly, this is a strategic choice, not reframing.

Leaving aside changes in emphasis and legislative maneuvering, efforts to truly reframe may be too problematic for the typical Washington lobby. To begin with, the people who are in power and who don't share a lobby's goals must be assumed to be just as politically savvy. Is the opposition going to be swayed by a new argument, even one that is closer to its own philosophy? If a lobbyist wanting to reframe cannot convince himself that it is likely to work, why would he expend his scarce resources on it? Instead of a reframing effort, attention might turn to another, more promising issue. Or the organization might sponsor research that might create a more favorable environment for the issue when an opportunity presents itself sometime in the future. Or it might work the grassroots to strengthen itself and keep the issue alive with members of Congress when they visit home.

Most of the lobbyists interviewed for this study worked for corporations and trade associations. Given the tax cutting focus of the first term of the Bush administration, it is interesting that we came across relatively few tax cut proposals being worked on by lobbyists interviewed in the periods we were in town during the Clinton administration's

last year. It seems clear that they had strategically decided on other issues as their priorities, issues where they might find the administration receptive since tax cuts were not a major focus of the Clinton White House. What we didn't run across were efforts to reframe tax cut issues. Yet tax cut interests were there under the surface and business lobbyists brought them forward in abundance when George W. Bush came to town.

Independent of who is in power, new issues that lack urgency must be nurtured through governmental process until the time is right for action. We term this evolution *ripeness* to acknowledge that there huge variation in the opportunity structure of public policymaking. It may take years for an issue to develop as advocates work to build support over the long-term. John Kingdon calls this a "softening up" period to educate policymakers so that "when a short-run opportunity to push their proposal comes, the way has been paved."[32] One of our issues, legislation aimed at obtaining federal funding for infant hearing screening, had been circulating in the Congress for a decade before a favorable program was incorporated into an omnibus piece of legislation. This is not unusual in Washington, where there are a limited number of bills that get enacted each year. Organizations like the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the National Association of the Deaf persevered over the years, pushing the same basic argument that it is much more advantageous to diagnose a hearing problem at infancy rather than waiting for it to be diagnosed when a child starts school. There was no reframing that could push this basic argument into the background. Eventually this long-term effort bore fruit.

But the ebb and flow of politics is not a circadian rhythm of predictable cycles. Sometimes opportunities suddenly emerge, what Kingdon metaphorically describes as the

opening of policy windows.[33] Jones and Baumgartner identify periods of "punctuated equilibrium," where long-term stability can be disrupted by events, intellectual developments, and greater media attention. An event like the nuclear reactor accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania disrupts the equilibrium of interest group influence and gives the newly favored lobbies a chance to push longstanding proposals forward.[34] Such opportunities may lead to reframing as established truths have been shattered and everyone is considering the issue in a new light. After 911, for example, there was a mad rush in Washington to reframe all issues as related to national security. This sometimes reached the levels of farce. The American Traffic Safety Services Association, a trade group for road sign manufacturers, lobbied for more federal funds for street signs on the grounds that Americans would need better street signs to prevent traffic jams in the aftermath of a terrorist attack.[35] Nevertheless, some lobbies did successfully link a proposal they had been working on to post-911 security legislation before argumentation returned to more normal advocacy.[36]

Lobbies thus live in a world that rewards patience. Those that work to build support over time while they wait for the right party to win an election may sometimes find that fortune shines upon them. The reward may come with the sudden emergence of an opportunity, as was the case with 911. Generally, though, lobbies facing a hostile or apathetic government must be prepared to work for years to get their proposals enacted—if they're enacted at all.

Another facet of the pragmatism that guides Washington lobbying is that advocacy must contend with a *skeptical media*. Reporters and editors will consider new frames presented to them with a jaundiced eye, being sophisticated enough to understand

that lobbies push that which is to their advantage, not what is objective and true. It is part of the professional training of reporters that they must try to resist spin and to balance all views in their reporting. A reporter who prepares a story with a novel frame runs up against the norms of the profession and the vetting structure of a newspaper or broadcaster.

The greatest obstacle for lobbies needing media attention to help them persuade policymakers, is to get the media to pay attention in the first place. Many of the issues in our sample were invisible to anyone outside of the specialists in the field. As a consequence, most efforts to persuade the media are not efforts to convince reporters that they should view the relevant issue through a new frame, but that they should pay attention to the issue and give it some coverage. To get any kind of coverage is a major victory for many lobbyists around town. For the American Optometric Association pushing Congress to fund residency training for newly graduated optometrists, any publicity would have been a godsend. The problem wasn't the frame but that the *Washington Post* didn't regard the issue as important. When we asked a lobbyist working on this issue to outline what he would be doing to advance his cause we noticed that mention of media was conspicuous by its absence. When we asked specifically he responded simply, "No PR." What was left unsaid was obvious: that it was unrealistic to think that journalists would be interested in covering the issue.

But even for those lobbyists considering a new effort to reframe an issue that the *Washington Post* does cover, it must develop a realistic strategy to convince an experienced and talented beat reporter that he or she has the story all wrong. This is no small challenge. Since this is so difficult to do those lobbies with the resources may try to

change the environment around a story rather than influence reporters directly. Tactics such as paid advertising, histrionics, protests, photo ops with prominent celebrities, media events on Capitol Hill, sponsorship of research, appearances on talk shows, and the like may over the long run result in more attention for a lobby's cause. Most likely, however, such advocacy is really aimed at shifting attention to an argument that is already present in the debate over an issue and not at reframing.

<div align="center">Beliefs</div>

A third set of constraints on reframing derive from beliefs about what is right and about how an advocate succeeds at her vocation over time. Discussion here is organized around advocacy decisions influenced by conviction, credibility, and commitment over time. Although many lobbyists are happy to work for whoever will pay for their services, there are many others who work out of *conviction*. This is especially true of lobbyists for citizen groups and labor unions, who are typically fueled by ideology and are passionate about the righteousness of the issues they work on. Certainly labor union lobbyists are flexible on legislative strategy, but are they ever going to make arguments about justice and equality for workers a minor part of their advocacy? Is an environmental lobbyist ever going to be swayed from a primary argument that nuclear reactors are dangerous? That's the argument we heard when we interviewed an advocate from a liberal group opposed to nuclear power.

Such lobbyists are surely open to additional frames. The environmental lobbyist who is unyielding on matters of nuclear safety would not be adverse to also bringing forward the financial risks associated with nuclear power if she saw that it was advantageous. Nevertheless, ideological arguments endure over long periods of time and

are not dropped just because they are out of fashion or the wrong party holds office.

Investigating an issue centered around tariffs on imported steel, the industry

representative couldn't have been more emphatic: "Our argument? That's easy . . . We

believe in the free market." The labor lobbyist saw things differently but was equally

direct: "These are good paying jobs at stake." Their arguments were so basic that we

could have been talking to Adam Smith and Samuel Gompers. Even when it seems that

the time is propitious for a lobbyist to look for additional frames, the ideological core of

their advocacy is never completely pushed aside.

Although conviction may be more important for some lobbyists than others, all

lobbyists must be concerned about their *credibility.* Advocates know that to maximize

their effectiveness with key staffers, legislators, and administrators, they need to develop

a relationship with those individuals. This process cultivated over the years, through a

variety of interactions, where the lobbyist tries both to build support for his position and

to build respect for his work ethic and trustworthiness. In the words of one lobbyist, "my

reputation is my most valuable asset." [37] Part of building trust comes from when a

lobbyist makes an argument about what is critical to the organization and then stays with

that argument for some time. To come back to an office a few months or even a year later

with a whole new frame can work against one's reputation.

This is not to argue that lobbyists should be unyielding and refuse to compromise.

Lobbyists, even the most idealistic of the bunch, are ultimately pragmatists. They don't

find taking half a loaf to be a sin of Biblical proportions. But, again, it's important to

distinguish between strategic considerations as to how to move a proposal forward, and

efforts to reorient an argument through reframing. For a lobbyist to jump around from

argument to argument, trying to find a frame that works, is counterproductive. When a lobbyist meets with a legislative staffer and asks him to buy into an argument, that lobbyist is, in effect, asking the staffer to go to his boss and ask the legislator to push that argument forward. After making that pitch to the legislator, is that same staffer going to want to hear the lobbyist try to reframe the issue six months down the road? It's conceivable that a lobbyist who wants to catalyze a reframing would have to make such a pitch to staffers whose boss actually wrote the original legislation now at issue. In short, continuity is often part of credibility.

Finally, *staying the course* turns out to be an effective strategy. In his study of interest groups and the legislative agenda Berry found that there is much to be said for continuity in issue advocacy. Berry did not use arguments or frames as a unit of analysis, but what he did observe over decades is that a key ingredient of the liberal citizen groups' success was to stay in the trenches, working on the same issues, year after to year. By investing organizational resources into the development of expertise by staffers, the lobbies enhanced their influence by investing in people who developed reputations as a leading expert on a particular issue. When legislative staffers, administrative agency officials, or reporters need to know more about a problem, they know who to call for reliable information.[38]

Is such an organizational development strategy incompatible with reframing? In theory, no. One's expertise on an issue could be broad enough to be able to adapt it to different frames. However, expertise on complex public policy matters can be highly technical. Reporters may call a particular person at an environmental group precisely because she has a great deal of expertise on emissions from steel mills. It is the data that

is offered and the proven reliability of that expert over the years that makes her so valuable. If that person has been documenting for years that particulate emissions at a specific level are harmful to public health, she may not be the best lobbyist for arguing a new frame about the economic inefficiency of such steel mills.

<u>Change and the Status Quo</u>

The central finding on framing is not that nothing ever changes. Of the 98 issues 30 percent underwent some degree of policy change during the initial two-year cycle in which we studied each case. Stretching the time frame to the succeeding two-year period raised the figure to 40 percent of issues that underwent some degree of change. But policy change and reframing appear to be unrelated as the data demonstrate that change is rarely the consequence of reframing. Thus, policy change is likely to originate from other sources.

Change can evolve from long-standing work by advocates, who build support over time by educating policymakers, reaching out to constituents, supporting research and then publicizing the results. External events can make some proposals more or less appealing. Occasionally an external shock is so great that an issue can be reframed, such as was the case with Three Mile Island. Other times trends and events move policy in less dramatic fashion, as was the case with the telephone excise tax. The decline in the economy simply made Congress less interested in tax cut proposals unrelated to the President's fiscal agenda. Most obviously, change can also come about from elections.

What are the implications of the rarity of successful reframing? At the broadest level we must recognize the power of the status quo. As we document further in our forthcoming book, in a policy debate the status quo side typically possesses enormous

advantages. In the national policymaking system there are many obstacles to overcome to enact change—it's just plain difficult to climb that mountain. In the Congress there are structural obstacles—two separate houses, divided control, the filibuster among others—that change agents must overcome to succeed in achieving their goals.

The advantages of the status quo drives advocates of change toward more modest goals and away from efforts to reframe. The day-to-day reality of Washington lobbying is that modifications of policy is typically what is possible. Issues all have histories and at any given time, there is a legacy of past policymaking that creates expectations and nurtures pragmatism.

Much of the advocacy we observed was oriented toward what Jones and Baumgartner call "attention shifting."[39] The limited space on the political agenda pushes advocates to select strategies that call attention to their issue, to their priorities, and to the severity of the problem as they see it. When we spoke with a business lobbyist working to try to amend the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, he complained that "in Congress, the enviros wear the white hat, and the farmers and business wear a black hat." He then conceded that "it's hard to argue that you shouldn't be looking at exposure from products" In his own way he was acknowledging the dense structure on policymaking on food safety. He knew that consumer interests and powerful consumer arguments on food safety could not be dismissed, so his focus was to get legislators and their aides to pay attention to the problems of his industry. It wasn't possible to fundamentally alter this issue, but it was possible that modifications in the law might help the industry reduce regulatory costs.

It's also the case that reframing can emerge incrementally. Beyond shifts in attention that, over time, yield more weight to particular arguments, are transformations that are qualitatively different than a reweighting of attention. In the case of capital punishment for example, an "innocence frame" emerged over the course of many years. As more and more death sentences were overturned by DNA tests and other exculpatory evidence, press coverage became dominated by stories emphasizing wrongful convictions of death row inmates. In turn, public opinion was influenced.[40] Unfortunately, the research design of our study did not allow for an analysis of incremental reframing. A much longer time frame than two elapsed Congresses would be necessary to adequately measure such change. Given the frequency of reframing found in this study and all the constraints on reframing identified here, our best guess is that change over time is more typically a matter of attention shifting than reframing.

Given the infrequency of reframing, why is it that journalists, pundits, politicos, and not a few political scientists have assumed that it is widespread? Certainly part of the reason is that reframing, beneath the surface of the academic language, embodies a popular, cynical view of the policymaking process. Teena Gabrielson captures this view succinctly, noting that "In the marketplace of American politics, the packaging of political issues is often as important as the product."[41] For all of us there is the tendency to believe that the objective virtue of our own policy positions is a victim of the other side's success at confusing the public with deceptive marketing of their positions. Beyond cynicism, however, is the reality that when reframing does take place, it can be of enormous importance. Although that wasn't the case in our sample of issues, there are examples of reframing making a huge difference. As noted above, the partial birth

abortion reframing had such a profound influence in that policy area that it became iconic evidence of the power of reframing.

Since reframing is so unusual, it appears that the "packaging" of issues may not be nearly as important as is commonly thought. Initial frames tend to be enduring and over time debate revolves around the core, not the surface. Assumptions that policymaking is highly influenced by the superficiality of advertising, public relations campaigns, test marketing, and well designed sound bites finds little support in the history of the 98 issues tracked for this study. There is, of course, change over time as modest adjustments move policies in one direction and the other. Surely enduring frames can adjust incrementally to accommodate evolutionary change, but this is not the result of the kind of strategic effort to reframe envisioned by Riker. Instead, policy changes over the years is likely to reflect the long-term investment of resources by interest groups in conventional advocacy, the accumulation of research, and the impact of real world trends and events.

Endnotes

[1] Carle Hulse, "Fine Art of Debating a Point Without Getting to the Point," *New York Times*, March 30, 2004, p. A16.

[2] See James N. Druckman, "On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame?", *Journal of Politics* 63 (November 2001), pp. 1042–1044.

[3] Donald R. Kinder and Thomas E. Nelson, "Democratic Debate and Real Opinions," in Karen Callaghan and Frauke Schnell, *Framing American Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 103.

[4] George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), p. xv.

[5] Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions," *Journal of Business* 59 (October 1986), pp. 254–255.

[6] Druckman, "On the Limits of Framing Effects," p. 1061.

[7] Riker writes, "*Heresthetic* is a word I have coined to refer to a political strategy. Its root is a Greek word for choosing and electing." *The Art of Political Manipulation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. ix.

[8] Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, pp. 106–113.

[9] William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 9.

[10] Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, p. 106.

[11] The best early treatment of this idea is in E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960).

[12] Bryan D. Jones, *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 78–102.

[13] John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 165.

[14] Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

[15] Robert Pear, "In Medicare Debate, Massaging the Facts," *New York Times*, May 23, 2004, p. A19.

[16] Bob Thompson, "Sharing the Wealth," *Washington Post Magazine*, April 13, 2003, p. 23.

[17] Admittedly, we have used a broad brush to paint political journalists. Although far too many stories assume campaigns or the policymaking process are easily manipulable, there is good journalism that recognizes the obstacles faced by those trying to alter a frame. See, for example, Matt Bai, "The Framing Wars," *New York Times Magazine*, July 17, 2005, pp. 38ff; and Noam Scheiber, "Wooden Frame," *New Republic*, May 23, 2005, pp. 14ff.

[18] On the selling of the Contract with America and the Clinton health plan, see Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[19] Http://www.prwatch.org/prwissues/2002Q4/war.html.

[20] Jacobs and Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander*, p. 50.

[21] Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *American Political Science Review* 87 (June 1993), pp. 334–347; and Deborah A. Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (1989), pp. 281–301.

[22] The universe we sample from is composed of the filings for 1996. This is the last year for which these registration data were compiled in a usable format at the time we began the data collection. See Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech, "Studying Interest Groups Using Lobbying Disclosure Forms," *VOX POP* 18 (Fall 1999), pp. 1-3.

[23] Druckman, "On the Limits of Framing Effects," p. 1061.

[24] See Jeffrey M. Berry, "Validity and Reliability Issus in Elite Interviewing," *PS* 35 (December 2002), pp. 679-682; and Beth L. Leech, "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews," *PS* 35 (December 2002), pp. 665-668.

[25] Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, p. 77.

[26] The logic of this second calculation is that an issue cannot be reframed if it's no longer under discussion. In selecting out cases which, at the second stage of research, were no longer being actively considered, our criteria was a firm conviction that the particular issue was off the table for the immediate future. Given the nature of policymaking, only 13 of our cases met this standard, leaving 85 which might have been susceptible to reframing. Yet there are counterarguments to using this second method. First, in American politics, are issues ever really off the table? If some advocate can think of a way of reframing an issue they've lost on, they may try to generate a new or altered frame no matter how "settled" the issue seems. Second, our 98 issues are a random sample of issues lobbyists were working on at one point in time. The first method tells us how many of those issues underwent reframing one Congress later. The 13 issues that reached a termination point are simply part of what happens to a set of issues drawn at any one time. Since the difference in the two calculation is tiny, it's clear that the substantive result of the research is unaffected by the alternative approaches.

[27] Douglas Jehl, "Bush will Modify Ban on New Roads in Federal Lands," *New York Times*, May 4, 2001, p. A1.

[28] On the constraints and potential of reframing, see James N. Druckman, "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects," *American Political Science Review* 98 (November 2004), pp. 671-686; James N. Druckman and Kjersten R. Nelson, "Framing and Deliberation: How Citizens' Conversations Limit Elite Influence," *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (October 2003), pp. 729-745; and Philip H. Pollock III, "Issues, Values, and Critical Moments: Did 'Magic' Johnson Transform Public Opinion on AIDS?", *American Journal of Political Science* (May 1994), pp. 426-446.

[29] Frank Rich, *The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (New York: Penguin, 2006); and Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off Center* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[30] Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, pp. 3-34.

[31] John P. Heinz, Edward O. Laumann, Robert L. Nelson, and Robert H. Salisbury, *The Hollow Core* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[32] Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, p. 134.

[33] Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, pp. 173-204.

[34] Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[35] Stephen Power, "Companies Cry 'Security' to Get a Break from the Government," *Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2003, p. A1.

[36] National security arguments were not abundant in our sample of issues. Since our analysis extended beyond 911, it may be that the window of opportunity for reframing after 911 was short-lived outside of direct military and security issues.

[37] Jeffrey M. Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 98.

[38] Jeffrey M. Berry, *The New Liberalism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999).

[39] Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[40] Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna De Boef, and Amber E. Boydstun, *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming, 2008).

[41] Teena Gabrielson, "Obstacles and Opportunities: Factors that Constrain Elected Officials' Ability to Frame Political Issues," in Callaghan and Schnell, *Framing American Politics*, p. 76.