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Author

Lakoff, George

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What the Pundits Missed

by **George Lakoff**

The usual pundits, for all their verbiage, have missed a lot, especially since they have nobody from the cognitive and brain sciences discussing the election. Here's part of what's been missing from the discussion.

First, conservatives have an extensive, but not obvious communications system, with many think tanks, framing experts, training institutes, a system of spokespeople linked by talking points, and bookers booking their people not just on radio and TV, but in lots of civic venues. This system is active not only in elections, but 24/7/365. Democrats have no comparable system.

Second, demographers report that the big swing in this election was among "independents." What are called "independents" are actually bi-conceptuals -- people who have both conservative and progressive conceptual systems in their brains, each inhibiting the other and usually applying to different issues. When such voters hear messages from one side but not the other, that side's moral system becomes active and is made stronger. That happened all over the country in this election.

Third, voters vote on the basis of their morality and their sense of self, which is a reflection of their moral values. In this election, conservatives reached the bi-conceptuals over the past year and a half preaching their morality (e.g. freedom -- government takeover; life -- death panels). The Obama administration only countered with policy, which goes in one ear and out the other. No moral leadership via messaging.

What is being missed is the enormous effect of this massive communications failure by the Democrats.