

Rational Ground on the Rio Grande:  
George W. Bush and Comprehensive Immigration Reform

By

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## Abstract

During his second term, George W. Bush pushed comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), a policy that addressed illegal immigration through several provisions at once. Some of those provisions were favored by conservative border security hawks, including augmenting Border Patrol efforts with technology and increased manpower, while others were favored by pro-immigration liberals, including a temporary worker program and a clear path to citizenship. To pass both at the same time was clearly a challenge, but President Bush was the perfect man for the job, due to his security credentials and his left-leaning immigration stance. Bush seized what he thought was the perfect moment to capitalize on broad public support for the general outline of CIR. For nearly two years, his push for CIR ran into problems, including two counter-movements, a sweeping change of the makeup of Congress, and xenophobic hysteria stirred up by the right wing. Bush's prolonged failure to garner public support for CIR became the defining domestic failure of his second term. To date, no explanation of his failure on CIR accounts for his rhetoric, an oversight that deprives the historical record of understanding presidential leadership. This dissertation combines social movement theory and a generally inductive method based in the rhetorical situation to explain how Bush failed to pass CIR.

## Acknowledgments

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## Dedication

To my favorite distraction, Malcolm, who is screaming at the top of his lungs even as I type this.

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## Chapter One: The Rhetorical Situation

In late 2005, George W. Bush introduced a policy initiative addressing a variety of problems in immigration policy. Generally referred to as comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), Bush's approach avoided piecemeal legislation that would increase border security or create a one-time amnesty provision, like the policies favored by his predecessors. CIR included a provision to create a clear path to citizenship for those already living in the United States, another provision creating temporary worker programs for those who would enter in the future, and a third provision to increase Border Patrol funding to stem the tide of illegal immigrants from Mexico, along with various other measures. While the specific policies around those provisions changed from bill-to-bill, including the length of border fencing, the end of catch-and-release policies, and other small differences, the three general tenets remained consistent. The idea first gained steam under the Clinton administration while being championed by Barbara Jordan (Sailer, 2013, para. 6), who argued that negotiating a variety of interrelated concerns at once would create better policy than passing a series of bills negotiated separately. Bush wanted to make wholesale changes to the way the United States government legislated immigration (Stengle & Thomas, 2013, para. 6) and to do so he introduced a far-reaching policy based around compromise.

Democrats were initially suspicious of Bush on immigration. Then-Senate minority leader Harry Reid said that Bush had as little credibility on immigration as he had on national security or Iraq (Senate Democrats, 2006, para. 2), a sentiment Illinois Senator Richard Durbin echoed, suggesting Bush's immigration efforts disguised an unrealized sinister motive involving Iraq ("Democrats' Immigration Response," 2006, para. 16). However, they eventually realized that Bush might be the only president who could deliver sweeping reforms, because he supported



the Democrat-friendly provisions of CIR on idealistic grounds and had the credibility with the right to ensure conservative votes on the issue.

By May of 2006, the Senate version of an immigration bill had garnered strong support from the left, converting Democrat stalwarts Harry Reid, Ted Kennedy, and others. Republican strategists also came onboard, including Karl Rove, who encouraged Republicans to increase their outreach to Latinos as part of his plan to create a “durable Republican majority” (Egan, 2012, para. 3), a broad coalition whose electoral might would be unassailable (Miranda, 2006). As Bush began a months-long campaign to push his policy, it appeared he had bipartisan support, something he’d lacked in previous campaigns to revise Social Security and gain support for a same-sex marriage ban (Bush, 2010, p. 306; Medhurst, 2008).

For a time, it appeared that the stars had aligned for Bush on CIR. Both political parties agreed that immigration was a considerable problem that needed attention, Bush had the credibility and trust from both sides of the aisle to empower him to make change, and as he went public with his appeals, he knew he could count on key voting blocs for support, particularly growing Latino communities in the key battleground states of Florida, Colorado, and Arizona which would be appealing to Republicans interested in the party’s longevity (Edsall and Goldfarb 2006). Unlike Social Security reforms that collapsed over the summer, Bush shared policy ground with his Democratic opponents, suggesting his opposition would be minimal (Galston 2007). The path looked clear.

Optimism was short-lived. Bush’s support on the right, a group on whom he could traditionally rely, fell through. Key conservative constituencies insisted that Bush scrap CIR in favor of Republican-friendly security measures and Congressional Republicans opted to pass an incredibly punitive bill that focused solely on border security without addressing a temporary

worker program or a path to citizenship (Currie, 2006; Dukakis and Mitchell, 2006) instead of the omnibus bill that would address a variety of concerns simultaneously (Serwer, 2013, para. 1). The Senate version never passed into conference committee (Senate Democrats, 2006, para. 1) and Bush's immigration reforms died.

The failure was one of President Bush's biggest disappointments in office, personally and politically. If offered one "do-over" from his presidency, it would be CIR, he told Cal Thomas of *The Washington Times* in 2009, because "a system that is so broken that humans become contraband is a system that really needs to be re-examined" (2009, Question 28, para. 3) and the continued dehumanization of immigrants upset him on a personal level. Building on Bush's emotional attachment to the issue, Mickey Kaus (2007) called CIR the "domestic Iraq" (para.1) noting the similarities between the two issues representing equally idealistic approaches that sought, "in one fell swoop, to achieve a grand solution to a persistent, difficult problem" (para. 5) that had foiled Bush's presidential predecessors.

Also like Iraq, Bush faced considerable political backlash when he failed to deliver results that lived up to expectations. Republicans did not share his personal connection to immigration and Bush's failure cost him considerable support among his base. Byron York (2007) explained that conservative Washington insiders were "unhappy because the president allied himself with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy," never beloved of conservative Republicans, to craft "an immigration deal that leaned too far toward amnesty for illegal immigrants" (para. 3).

When momentum for the bill stalled, conservative talk radio stirred up considerable public opposition to the bill, which they labeled amnesty. Consequently, conservative lawmakers felt the need to pander to their base with a far more partisan bill in time for the 2006 midterm elections, prompting an editorial in *The New York Times* to mockingly suggest the

Republicans' idea of omnibus legislation would be a bill to outlaw "illegal gay liberal Mexican flag burners" (Immigration Road Show, 2006, para. 7).

Bush has been clear and outspoken regarding the blame for the failure of the bill, in interviews, in his memoir, and in public addresses since he left office. He did not blame his immigration loss on the rapid erosion of popular support during 2006 or the sudden disappearance of his Republican allies. He also avoided taking the blame himself, in spite of focusing his domestic agenda on the issue for over a year with few results. From his perspective, pushing Social Security directly before CIR was the key strategic mistake that was chiefly, if not solely, responsible for his failure to pass the immigration reform bill he championed. Bush explained that he, "should have pushed immigration reform right after the '04 election and not Social Security reform" (Question 28, para. 2) because Social Security reform was the infamous "third rail" of American politics and Congress was unwilling to act "until the crisis [was] upon us" (Question 28, para. 2). In *Decision Points* (2010), he echoed this sentiment by extolling the virtues of CIR, which unlike Social Security reform, "had bipartisan support. The wildfire of opposition that erupted against immigration reform in 2006 and 2007 might not have raged as hot in 2005...When Social Security failed, it widened the partisan divide and made immigration tougher" (p. 306), exacerbating a partisan political environment in which any subsequent agenda items were non-starters on Capitol Hill. In Bush's alternate history, changing the order in which he pushed his reforms, while changing nothing else about his actions, would have prevented Congressional intransigence and ideological in-fighting, which in turn would have salvaged his second term and preserved his domestic legacy.

To scholars of presidential rhetoric, Bush's explanation rings hollow. If presidential leadership cannot ferry a popular proposal with broad support through the process of becoming

law because of a matter as trivial as scheduling, then presidential leadership has little actual function in our democracy and is hardly worth the media attention and scrutiny it receives. To suggest that the partisan divide was an insurmountable obstacle directly contradicts Bush's contention that the bill originally enjoyed widespread bipartisan support. His explanation also fails to explain why it was his party that abandoned the proposal or how talk radio so successfully exploited that partisan divide. Bush's narrative paints the presidency as incapable of shaping public support and further ignores his opposition's rhetorical efforts. However, the failure of immigration reform cannot be explained by a resigned glance at the calendar. The rhetorical dimension of Bush's failure is best explained through the process of analyzing Bush's rhetoric in the context of the rhetorical situation he faced.

The stark disparity between the state of immigration reform at its 2005 outset and its 2007 conclusion highlights the rhetorical dimensions of Bush's failure in general terms. CIR started with bipartisan support, but left behind a massive partisan divide. The bill came along in a time of clear need, but Bush's campaign failed to generate a groundswell of public support around that need. Passing the reforms was crucial to the Republican party's political future, but the campaign failed to convince conservative lawmakers to take unified action in their collective self-interest.

Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that American attitudes towards immigrants and immigration change when they pay attention to the issue, making this subject one of the most likely areas on which presidential rhetoric can foster widespread change in opinion. Christopher Muste (2013) found that survey respondents' feelings about immigration changed as a result of survey questions drawing their attention to the issue. Branton and Dunaway (2009a; 2009b) found the increased attention border communities pay to immigration has a substantial impact on

the valence and salience of attitudes of those living in such communities. Finally, much of the work on media and presidential framing, which will be explained in detail in chapter two, has found a positive effect on attitudes that arises from audience attention, absent any other factors. Simply by spending time giving speeches on immigration, research strongly suggests Bush should have had a positive and measurable effect on audience opinion.

The amount of presidential time and capital wasted on immigration reform brings to mind Bitzer's (1968) warning that a rhetorical situation "does not invite just any response...it invites a *fitting* response" (p.10, emphasis original). At first glance, it seems that Bush's response fit his situation poorly, given the advantages he enjoyed at the outset of his push and his eventual failure. After a year of presidential attention on immigration reform, the fact that Bush failed to find a fitting response is startling.

To better understand the rhetorical situation which called Bush's rhetoric into being, the next section follows Bitzer's (1968) call to outline "the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse" (p.1), because "rhetorical works belong to the class of things which obtain their character from the circumstances of the historical context in which they occur" (p. 3). The section is comprised of three sub-sections, each of which is part of the rhetorical situation. The first sub-section explains how illegal immigration became increasingly urgent for voters and therefore for elected officials. The second section looks at the unique attributes George W. Bush possessed that inspired key stakeholders to believe he could achieve change on the issue. The final subsection looks at the audiences Bush faced who could not only be influenced by Bush's appeals, but were potential "mediators for change" (p. 8), specifically focusing on Congressional Republicans, whose votes on the bill were crucial to its

passage, the American voters who could pressure lawmakers into passage of the bill, and Latinos who could, and eventually did, make their voice heard through organized demonstration.

Outlining the elements of the rhetorical situation at the outset of Bush's push helps explain the general contextual elements that gave rise to Bush's rhetoric, but even a general outline involves "presence," imbuing certain events and rhetorical efforts with meaning simply through selecting them as worthy of analysis. Richard Vatz (1973) used Chaim Perelman's argumentation theory to explain how the choice of texts by the critic is not neutral or valueless, but rather "an act of creativity. It is an interpretive act" (p.157). Therefore, in the final section of this chapter I explain which critical methods I use to analyze the failure of CIR and which texts were selected to represent each stage of Bush's rhetoric. I also preview the analysis to come.

### **Context**

Immigration reform was a difficult proposition towards the end of the twentieth century. Piecemeal amnesty bills passed under Reagan and Clinton legalized the citizenship of approximately 5.6 million new Americans (NPR Staff, 2010; Swarns, 2006; Weiner, 2013), while funding for Border Patrol increased substantially throughout the same time period in an attempt to prevent illegals crossing into the United States (Gomez, 2013). Most notably, the 1986 Simpson-Mazzoli act, often referred to by journalists and lawmakers as "the Reagan amnesty" (Pear, 2007; "A Reagan Legacy," 2010; Plumer, 2013; Gentilviso, 2013) granted an amnesty to around 3 million immigrants living in the United States illegally. However, large-scale legislation addressing contradictions and difficulties in immigration policy did not come to fruition, partly due to the "ambivalent, contradictory, and sometimes hostile" (Ewing, 2012, p. 1) nature of U.S. citizens' attitudes about immigration (Muste, 2013; Pew, 2006), and partly due to

government's inability to address these multifaceted concerns. Unfortunately, many of the provisions in the Reagan amnesty were set to expire by the end of 2006, leaving future of border security and immigration policy very much in doubt.

On one hand, voters have never been particularly sympathetic to immigrants. Whether discussing African, Asian, or even Western European immigrants historically, the degree to which Americans were willing to accept newcomers was often derived from material concerns, rather than higher-minded ideals (Ewing, 2012). Americans have seen immigration as a matter of entitlement, favoring those who already have citizenship unless the country needed a cheap labor force. Native-born Americans, themselves the descendants of immigrants, "have often taken a dim view of the growing numbers of Latin American, Asian, and African immigrants who began to arrive in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (Ewing, 2012).

By the Clinton administration, twice as many Americans wanted the level of immigration reduced as thirty years before, with nearly two out of every three Americans supporting immigration reduction (Muste, 2013, table 3). Clinton turned to the Jordan commission, which spent much of the 1990's isolating the best objectives in CIR. In 1994, *U.S. Immigration Policy: Restoring Credibility* recommended stronger enforcement at the border and workplaces in order to curb illegal immigration, bemoaning "Serious problems [that] undermine present immigration policies, their implementation, and their credibility" (Recommendations, para. 1). The combination of bureaucratic incompetence and lax border enforcement created a perverse incentive system in which legal immigration was too difficult and illegal immigration was too easy.

The following year, the Jordan commission published *Legal Immigration: Setting Priorities*, which laid out clear legislative objectives to address these concerns. Rather than

attempting to increase or decrease the number of immigrants granted citizenship status on an ad hoc basis or blindly throwing resources at border security until the flow of immigrants ceased, the commission suggested a comprehensive approach to address many concerns at once. The idea that successful immigration legislation required a multi-pronged effort that included measures that would be controversial to both Republicans and Democrats made the goal clear, but it also made the politics of passing such a bill difficult at best.

By the early 2000s, problems with immigration policy had reached a boiling point. While the portion of Americans who wanted to decrease immigration had doubled in the three decades leading up to 1995, the following decade reversed that trend. In the years between the Jordan Commission and the beginning of Bush's push for immigration reform, the portion of Americans who wanted to *increase* the level of immigration doubled (Muste, 2013, chart 1). Even more baffling, at the same time that more Americans wanted more immigration, the portion that sought reductions remained unchanged (Muste, 2013, table 1). By the time Bush addressed CIR, his audience wanted immigration to increase and decrease, both at twice the rate of the previous generation. Americans were increasingly divided about what to do, but also increasingly unified that something needed to be done. By 2005, only one in five Americans thought the government was "doing enough with respect to illegal immigration" (Table 16) and less than half of those who did think the government was doing enough supported the government's actions strongly (Table 16).

Much of the increased polarization on immigration can be accounted for by the difficulty Americans had in identifying the problem to which the government should respond. As Americans agreed that there was an immigration problem, they disagreed on the nature of the problem in significant ways. The left contended that immigration was "a humanitarian crisis in



our borderlands” (Holub, 2010). Moderates believed the economic problem trumped humanitarian concerns, as highlighted by David Brooks, who lamented, “The forlorn pundit doesn’t even have to make the humanitarian case that immigration reform would be a great victory for human dignity. The cold economic case by itself is so strong” (2013, para. 2). And at the same time, the right could not reckon with economic factors while under the shadow of a security threat, arguing “the real problem presented by illegal immigration is security, not the supposed threat to the economy” (Kane & Johnson, 2006, para. 6). Clearly a large-scale, comprehensive package was called for to remedy the many outstanding issues regarding border security and living conditions for illegal immigrants. Unfortunately, the variety of those demands made it difficult to craft a satisfactory policy.

By 2006, however, a tenuous political consensus had formed around the legislation Bush proposed, with a path to citizenship to please those with humanitarian concerns, interior enforcement mechanisms for those with economic concerns, and a wide variety of proposals for those with security concerns. Republican strategists recognized the political potential of appealing to a growing Latino voting bloc on a political level, while valuing border security on an ideological one as well. Democrats were willing to deal with a President who had strong credibility on immigration, because they wanted many of the provisions in the bill as well and were unlikely to be offered a friendlier bill by any other Republican.

### **George W. Bush**

At first blush, it might not appear that George W. Bush was the appropriate leader to take up the mantle of CIR, an idea whose strength was tied to bipartisanship and compromise. As Keith Hennessey noted, “the tenure of President George W. Bush was dominated by partisanship. There were deep partisan splits over the war in Iraq, enhanced interrogation,

wiretapping, the 2003 tax cuts, and Social Security reform” (2010, para. 1). Gary Jacobson (2007) made the case that Bush pursued partisanship as a political strategy, preferring conflict over compromise, a view summarized in Ron Suskind’s (2004) portrait of an uncompromising Bush who relied on his faith in order to demonize his opposition (para. 12). Gregg Easterbrook explained the partisan divide Bush pursued was existential and spiritual, between “people who believe in something larger than themselves, and people who believe that it’s all an accident of chemistry” (Keller 2003, para. 10). The conventional wisdom is that Bush presided over an ideologically divided America, strengthened that divide at every opportunity, and used his faith to stymie rational debate, all of which made political compromise during the Bush presidency grudging, cautious, and rare.

A slightly deeper look reveals that Bush was not only the right man for the job, but perhaps the only one with the credibility on immigration necessary to ensure compromise. He had Democratic support on the issue (Schumer, 2006), Latinos gave him a 68% job approval rating early in his presidency (Alonso-Zaldivar, 2002, para. 4) and success on the issue was crucial to Republicans interested in borrowing some of Bush’s credibility to wooing Latino voters.

The roots of Bush’s credibility on immigration were based in his long history with the issue, having served as Governor of Texas, during which time he “expressed sympathy with Mexican immigrants” (Visa Law, 1999, para. 1) and regularly gave interviews in Spanish for Spanish-language media outlets. As Bush campaigned in 2000, he attacked inefficiencies at INS (Eisner, 2000, para. 3) and told the La Raza annual conference that he “wanted immigrants to the United States to be welcomed with open arms” (Gonzales, 2000). Bush became the second president, after Gerald Ford, to speak at naturalization ceremonies, showing that “immigrants

need not be feared, but greeted with ‘openness and courtesy’ because the very act of their immigration and eventual naturalization was about breathing and living the ‘American philosophy’” (Edwards, 2014, p. 45).

## **Audience**

In the spring of 2006, a majority of Americans wanted to provide some sort of amnesty for those already living in the U.S. but they also saw illegal immigration as “a serious problem” (“State of American public opinion,” 2006), suggesting that a policy that augmented border security while providing a path to citizenship would be popular. The perceived urgency of the problem suggested that achieving some sort of omnibus bill would be a political victory for Bush, his supporters, and those in favor of most immigration reforms. Bush had an opportunity to win over swing voters as well, because a majority of Americans disapproved of how Bush had handled immigration up to that point, and generally expressed “greater confidence in Democrats on immigration issues than Republicans” (“State of American public opinion,” 2006), a trend that suggested a centrist approach could be very successful for Bush’s political future.

In addition to the benefits of meeting American voters in the center, Republicans realized it was in their self-interest to woo the Latino voting base. Increasingly, swing voters were turning from the GOP, largely because the Latino population grew more quickly than the primarily Anglo Republican base (Roperreports, 2004, results). Florida was a particularly notable swing state in both of Bush’s Presidential campaigns, with 380,000 voters representing the margin of victory for Bush in 2004 (Washington Post, 2004, results), meaning the 2004 Presidential election was effectively determined by around one-tenth of one percent of American citizens (Census.gov), making even slight demographic changes in the voting base crucial to both sides. Since 2004, Latino voting populations had been growing in size and their composition was increasingly liberal. The ideological shift among the overall Latino voting bloc was clearest in Florida, as traditionally conservative Cubans represented a shrinking proportion of the voting population and more liberal voters of Mexican and Central American descent surged there

(Goodnough, 2004). Among Latinos nationwide, Bush's nine point defeat in 2000 might seem like a poor showing, but no Republican presidential candidate has received as much Latino support in a Presidential election before or since (Roperreports, 2012; CNN Polling, 2012; Bloomberg Businessweek, 2012). While Karl Rove rarely spoke about immigration in 2006, since Bush left office he has been a regular on Fox News extolling the importance of the Latino vote to the future of the Republican Party. Immigration, he argued "keeps Latinos who otherwise agree with us from hearing us," (Roberts, 2014, para. 15).

Neither the general support CIR enjoyed among the American people nor Bush's popularity among Latinos was reflected in the voters' overall attitudes towards Bush, as many voters were beginning to turn away from the President. In May of 2006, George W. Bush's approval rating was at a dismal 31% (Gallup, 2013). Among the most surprising numbers were his approval ratings among conservatives, which had dipped to 52%, while his support among moderates was a putrid 28% (Page, 2006), largely due to his administration's failures on Hurricane Katrina and Iraq (Lipton, 2006). The American people were increasingly critical of the Bush administration's "abdication of the most solemn obligation to provide for the common welfare" (Lipton, 2006, para. 7) of Americans, and the August 2005 flooding of New Orleans, combined with a command-and-control infrastructure that seemed confused and disinterested served to galvanize popular opinion against the administration. From April 2005 to April 2006 Bush's support had plummeted from half of America to half of conservatives (CNN, 2006).

### **Analysis and Text Selections**

The critical method I use in this study draws from two bodies of research. The first is social movement criticism, which started with Leland Griffin, who looked to the study of collective action as an alternative to neo-classical criticism's focus on great orators. By studying

a “multiplicity of speakers, speeches, audiences, and occasions” (1952, 184), Griffin hoped to outline a theory that could guide future research. Unfortunately, no unified theory of social movements exists. Scholars have been unable to develop a consensus on what objects are worthy of study, how social movements differ from other forms of collective action, and most difficult for this study, no unified method of analysis (Burghardt, 2010).

David Zarefsky (1980) expressed skepticism that social movements are clearly defined objects with objectively definable goals that remain constant among movements. Drawing from Zarefsky’s work, I argue that movements should be understood as a form of collective action that draws its defining elements from the historical context in which they exist. Therefore, Griffin’s social movement outline is used as a metaphor to organize and illuminate how Bush’s rhetoric progressed over time, from inception, to crisis, to consummation, and how at each stage his rhetoric evolved to meet specific goals arising from his audience and the rhetorical situation.

Zarefsky’s (1980) skeptical view of movement theory requires the second approach that informs the critical method in this paper, an inductive, audience-centered view of the rhetorical situation and the rhetoric Bush employed in response. This study starts from a broad analysis of key texts that will reveal strategies to be considered in reference to audience data. It is important to bring in this second method, because while the rhetoric of social movements progresses and changes over time, it also consists of individual texts created within a particular historical moment and performed for an audience within that particular moment.

These two approaches can be viewed as complementary. The inductive approach will identify patterns that can then be integrated within the focus on Bush’s rhetoric as a form of a social movement, proceeding in three acts from inception to crisis to consummation. The overall method in this study requires the two approaches to complement each other in order to explain

whether or not each text resonated with an audience, measuring resonance with historical context, audience data, and relevant theory. The inductive approach explains how each text is constructed and delivered to an audience within a specific historical context, while the general organization of a social movement shows how those texts change over time, in response to an evolving rhetorical situation and constraints arising from Bush's previous rhetoric.

Once Bush's push for CIR is divided into broad stages, the second step is to consider the ingredients of the rhetoric in relation to the rhetorical situation Bush faced, in order to develop "a sense of what goes with what" (Burke, 1984, p.74). The key tool used to identify the relevant ingredients in each text is a descriptive analysis, similar to the models outlined in Campbell et al.'s (2013) *The Rhetorical Act: Thinking, speaking, and writing critically* and Rowland's (2010) *Analyzing Rhetoric: A handbook for the informed citizen in a new millennium*.

Descriptive analysis is a tool to focus a critic's attention "on how [rhetorical acts] are intended to work in order to influence audiences" (Campbell et al., p. 52). This open-ended method is based in a number of broad categories, including purpose, audience, persona, tone, evidence, structure, and strategies, and it is flexible enough to accommodate other categories as they present themselves. While descriptive analysis does not itself prescribe specific theory, the method "offers a vocabulary for discussing rhetorical action and a method to identify what is distinctive about a particular persuasive effort" (p. 28) allowing the critic to make a judgment.

Once the elements of the rhetorical situation have been identified, including historical context, rhetorical barriers, and the specific ingredients of the rhetorical act, the final step requires the identification of larger strategic patterns within Bush's rhetoric, within each stage and across stages over time. Strategic patterns discovered through descriptive analysis are

intimately tied to the rhetorical situation, because they highlight the selections made by a speaker to influence an audience within a historical context.

### **Contributions to Social Movement Theory**

Herbert W. Simons (1970) provided an example of the ideological blind spots that can afflict a critic who begins with theory rather than with the rhetorical situation. Simons developed a structural definition of movements based on sociological research, which he used to enumerate “rhetorical requirements” for leaders. In doing so, he argued that movements cannot be institutional and must interact with a larger structure. At first glance, it might seem that the leader of the free world would work within a clearly defined and highly organized institution, and that a president could never face a “larger structure” than the United States federal government, preventing Bush’s efforts from meeting the definitional requirements of a social movement. However, Bush looked to promote CIR “by appealing directly to the American public...forcing compliance from fellow Washingtonians by going over their heads” (Kernell, 2007, 2), a strategy known as going public, which eschews the institutional and material advantages the government usually provides to the president, and asks the American public to interact with the larger structure of Congress, meeting all of the rhetorical requirements of a social movement.

Another example of the blind spots caused by theory comes from Robert S. Cathcart (1972, 1978), who believed that movements have to act outside the system, in order for an agonistic dialectic to be formed between those in favor of the status quo and those in favor of reform. For politically-minded social movements, the system to which Cathcart refers is the government, and no individual could be more inside that system than the president. Once again, the strategy of going public shows how Bush made a deliberate choice to act outside the



traditional power system, and in doing so, operated within Cathcart's vision, except that he did so from the Oval Office. Martin Medhurst (1996) summarized the findings of many authors including Jeffrey Tulis and Glen Thurow, concluding that public-facing strategies the president may employ represent a massive shift in power within the political system, radically altering the rules that govern the system itself. Campbell and Jamieson (2008) begin from a similar premise, assuming that many presidential genres serve to take power from the legislative branch, which is supported by Samuel Kernell's (2006) work on going public. All of this research supports the idea that going public, the most common rhetorical strategy employed by presidents, is analogous to the power relationship between speaker and audience within social movement rhetoric.

While Bush's dialectic with his initial audience might not have been agonistic, his dialectic with the second audience, Congressional Republicans, certainly was. By going directly to voters, Bush hoped to persuade audience members to pressure Congress, which would force Congress to choose between passing his version of the bill and facing unemployment.

Zarefsky's case against Simons and Cathcart employed counter-examples to refute the definitions on which their work was built. He argued that Simons' case studies were generalizations rather than principled distinctions and drew from examples of presidential leadership to demonstrate that Simons' definition of movements was neither comprehensive nor unique to movements. His response to Cathcart drew from recent examples within the Carter administration and Zarefsky's (1977) own work with Lyndon Johnson to demonstrate that institutional reform efforts could be studied the same way as progressive social movements. In particular, he argued that dialectical enjoinder between rhetor and opposition is one of the

primary rhetorical acts within movement studies, whether or not those parties exist within institutions.

Thus, one reasonable approach to studying Bush's efforts to achieve CIR is by treating them as analogous to a social movement. Consequently, I will use the inductive method to explain the evolution of Bush's rhetoric from the period in which his efforts began through its ultimate failure, which I will describe using Griffin's terms of inception, crisis, and consummation. The two will work together to highlight the progression of Bush's rhetorical strategy within an evolving rhetorical situation.

### **Contributions to Presidential Campaign Research**

Presidential campaign rhetoric is a topic that has been heavily researched (Simons, Chesebro, and Orr, 1973; Rarick et al., 1977; Hart, 2009; Smith 2010), but research that ties strategic choices to the rhetorical situation highlights two key areas that this study should address. The first area of rhetorical scholarship to which I contribute looks at the relationship between a speaker's overall body of work and the particular needs of a specific social movement. Harpine (2001) explained that the strategy of working within a movement can curtail future rhetorical choices by a speaker, while Goodnight (1986) shows the converse, how a speaker's past rhetoric can constrain the choices afforded when using a movement strategy.

Harpine's (2001) work is especially applicable to immigration reform, because it focuses on polarization and the two-audience problem of social movements, in which a speaker needs to seem radical enough to motivate supporters while remaining moderate enough to avoid alienating the mainstream public. While Harpine discussed William Jennings Bryan, the example is illustrative of a pitfall facing Bush: it would be difficult to motivate his base without losing the Democrats who came across the aisle to help him, and vice versa.

Leadership is the second area in which this study can be helpful for uniting presidential campaign rhetoric and social movement theory. Bush's efforts on immigration were dependent on his leadership, which is granted through the authority of presidential rhetoric (Murphy, 2008), because audiences "rightly equate leadership with eloquence" (Condit, 2010). Stewart et al. (2007) show that leadership requires the ability to bring people together, arguing "Leaders must have organizational skills, particularly the ability to attract individuals to the idea of collective action and to draw people together into meaningful relationships and organizations" (p. 115). In order to pass immigration reform, Bush needed to show the kind of leadership that could bring people together, in order to support an omnibus deal requiring all sides to compromise. Thus, a study of his efforts on behalf of CIR has the potential to inform our understanding of presidential leadership.

### **Chapter Preview**

The second chapter will review relevant literature regarding George W. Bush and immigration reform. It will focus on news coverage of Bush's push for immigration reform first, to explain how the overall arc of his rhetoric was seen at the time. Next the chapter will look at the academic study of Bush's rhetoric in general and on immigration reform specifically. The following section begins by looking at research that discusses media framing, by far the largest body of academic literature on illegal immigration. Next, the chapter summarizes research on the rhetorical power of the presidency on issues relevant to immigration reform. The review of relevant literature in chapter two situates this study within a larger picture of Bush as a partisan ideologue who was talking to an ideologically charged audience within a complicated context about illegal immigration.

The subsequent three chapters tell the story of CIR in three parts, from inception to crisis to consummation. In the first section of each chapter I outline the historical context of the stage, including important events, audience data, and other background information about the rhetoric. Next, I isolate key ingredients from the rhetorical situation, including rhetorical barriers and purposes. In the subsequent section of each chapter, I sketch the strategic patterns found in Bush's rhetoric. Finally, I explain how the strategic patterns functioned against the barriers isolated in the earlier sections. Each chapter will focus on whether the rhetoric resonated for the situated audience, and if the rhetoric contributed to the overall efforts to achieve CIR.

Chapter three covers the inception stage, which began in November 2005, with Bush's "The Future of Immigration Policy" speech in Tucson, Arizona, and continued until the end of the year. The speech was the first Bush delivered which focused exclusively on immigration reform during his push, and themes from other rhetoric in the inception stage trace back to Tucson. Griffin (1960, p. 460) noted that a movement begins when people "rise up and cry *No* to the existing order" (emphasis original), which often requires developing a consensus about the state of the social order, and what it means to say "no." In the Tucson address, Bush stressed themes of insecurity and criminality among immigrants, and placed the blame for government inaction squarely on Congress, subtly weaving definitional strategies together to create associations between himself and the Border Patrol.

Chapter four discusses the crisis stage of immigration reform, which commenced in early 2006 with the emergence of two powerful counter-movements representing the extremes of both sides of the immigration debates. Even as pro-immigration protestors took to the streets in massive "Dia Sin Imigrantes" demonstrations, conservatives organized Congress-facing appeals including mailing bricks to Capitol Hill and occupying the Senate phone lines for weeks at a

time. Bush's rhetoric during crisis stage is best represented by two speeches. The first is his April 2006 "Immigration Reform" address in Irvine, California, which he delivered while the Senate was reviewing a CIR bill in committee. After the Irvine address, the Democratic-controlled Senate moved to floor debate on the bill, and Bush addressed the nation from the Oval Office, a historic and unprecedented milestone for immigration reform. As he delivered the Oval Office address, he hoped to move the Senate into negotiation with the Republican-controlled House on a compromise bill. Consequently, Bush adjusted his articulation of the problems associated with immigration, the potential solutions, and his opposition, generally moving to a strategy of inclusion based around rationality.

The final stage in a social movement is the consummation stage, in which the movement succeeds or fails. It is the subject of chapter five. On June 28th, 2007 the bill could not garner the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture, so it never went into conference with the House. Bush cited the 2007 Independence Day weekend as the conclusion of CIR, marked by the moment when Ted Kennedy called him in Rhode Island to tell him that the bill would not reach the floor again. "We believed we were within a vote or two of getting the comprehensive reform bill passed," Bush recalled, but Harry Reid called for a cloture vote, which failed, and once "Senators went home and listened to angry constituents stirred up by the loud voices on radio and TV," there was never another chance to get a compromise between the chambers (Bush, 2010, p. 305). Griffin explained that the consummation stage is "a time when the great proportion of aggressor rhetoricians abandon their efforts, either because they are convinced that opinion has been satisfactorily developed and the cause won, or because they are convinced that perseverance is useless" (Griffin, 1952, p. 186). For Bush, perseverance was useless.

Finally, chapter six summarizes the study's findings and explains how the research contributes to a larger theory. While previous chapters focused on what was said and how that rhetoric failed, chapter six will explain why those efforts failed to achieve change. It will also discuss how social movement theory can be used as an effective method in discussing presidential efforts like this one, tying the strategies from previous chapters together to discuss the overall resonance of Bush's rhetoric over time.

### **Conclusion**

While the stars were aligned for George W. Bush to pass CIR in 2006, he failed to do so, losing support from conservatives and poisoning further political efforts for the duration of his presidency. The President faced an anti-immigration campaign waged by talk radio and right wing conservatives and he failed to adequately respond to it. How and why Bush failed to overcome this hurdle is not well understood, and exploring it further will help explain why his rhetoric failed on the issue of immigration reform.

## Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

On its face, comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) does not seem particularly confusing. The bill was comprised of three general provisions, each aimed at the concerns of a different audience. The first provision, favored by the left, offered a clear path to citizenship for law-abiding immigrants who had been in the country a long time. The second provision, aimed at those with economic concerns, offered temporary work-visas, an idea that would have made immigrants easier to monitor and ensured low-cost labor in industries that needed it. The third provision, aimed at the right, greatly increased funding for border security to prevent the future entry of illegal immigrants. The bill responded to the Jordan Commission's warning that entering and living in the country illegally was easier than doing so legally, and required all three provisions to rectify the problem. Because all three provisions were required for the bill to function, CIR had to pass with all three provisions at the same time.

However, audience confusion is at the heart of much of the research regarding immigrants and immigration. Media framing research, by far the largest body of academic research on immigration reform, took as a given that public debates were governed by mediation, because low-information audiences generally require the media to create explanatory frames. Within that research, conversation did not progress past large-scale, big-picture questions, with no consensus on how audiences connect immigrants to immigration reform, and therefore little discussion of rhetorical strategies Bush may have employed.

Studies in presidential rhetoric offered little further explanation. Even the ideologically-based researchers who study metaphoric clusters made little out of Bush's messages, either opting for narrower topics within the immigration debate like California's Proposition 187 (Ono & Sloop, 2002) or tying limited analysis of Bush's immigration rhetoric into larger studies of

other issues, as did Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) and Souders and Dillard (2014). On Bush's other rhetorical efforts, critics often reach some level of consensus, as discussion of fear appeals, American exceptionalism, and religiosity within Bush's rhetoric on 9/11 or the Iraq War demonstrates. On his push for immigration reform, little consensus exists.

The rhetoric of a social movement has been likened to a drama, which is why Leland Griffin (1969) employed Kenneth Burke's dramatisic method to study them. In a three-act drama, the first act introduces the setting, brings in various characters, and generally introduces viewers to the story. The second act introduces conflict and comes to a climax. The final act resolves the conflict, and through resolution offers viewers "equipment for living" (Burke, 1973, p. 293) from how the conflict resolves. Even absent the analogy of a social movement, long-term presidential efforts imply progression and evolution, from explaining the problem, to crafting a response to the problem, through the eventual acceptance or rejection of the president's goals. Without moving through the progression of the movement, research misses the ultimate goal of the movement itself, and how that purpose drives the earlier rhetoric, because "every movement that would recruit its followers from among many discordant and divergent bands, must some spot to which all roads lead" (Burke, 1973, p.192).

This chapter explains the state of historical and rhetorical accounts into Bush's push for CIR. First, it examines popular media accounts of immigration reform and academic accounts of Bush's rhetoric to demonstrate that the historical account of the time is mired in confusion, and that efforts to ease confusion have been hampered by ideological constraints. Next, the chapter outlines the overall study of immigrants, immigration reform, and the presidency in academic scholarship. Academic accounts of immigration reform fall into two general categories. The first category is comprised of scholarship that studies the cognitive process by which audiences



connected immigrants with immigration reform, as understood through media coverage, and how Bush could intercept or alter those explanations. The second category is comprised of scholarship that connects biographical factors within the audience to explain how those traits influence audience predispositions towards immigrants and immigration reform efforts, and how Bush could rhetorically constitute subjectivity in his audience and influence attitudes.

### **Historical Accounts**

In *Decision Points* (2010), Bush discussed his belief that the failure of CIR was procedural, rather than political, and that view seems to be echoed in media coverage of the time. Virtually all news media coverage of Bush's efforts at the time was couched in terms of political gamesmanship and procedure, rather than rhetorical effect. The procedural approach taken by the media is evident in how journalists focused on competition over collaboration, the confusion journalists had in identifying Bush's audience on the rare occasions they discussed his audience, and a cynical depiction of conservatives that created a good-vs.-evil narrative.

Studies of immigration reform focused on a narrative of competition, instead of compromise. For example, the state of policy was headlined in April of 2006 as "An immigration impasse," in the *New York Times*, one month before they published "An immigration victory," with both articles focused on Bush's ability to make deals and little attention paid to how he generated public support. The impasse was marked by deadlocked Senators, unable to compromise, and lacking "the courage to foil the Republicans who had lighted the fuse on amendments intended to blow apart a pale and fragile compromise" ("Immigration Impasse," 2006, para. 2). By November, impasse was ongoing, and immigration reform was "on hold," because politicians had been "exploiting the illegal immigration problem

as a wedge issue,” (Trujillo, 2006, para. 7) according to the news media, who offered little analysis of the way that rhetorical leadership might resolve this problem.

While reporting on Bush’s Tucson speech, David Greene (2005) offered the most on-point analysis of Bush’s rhetoric, explaining the policy and offering this piece of audience analysis: “To try to woo his Republican skeptics, [Bush] talked about their priorities first” (para. 6). Unfortunately, Greene’s description of the general order in Bush’s speech would be the extent of his rhetorical analysis.

Later in the same radio program, Ted Robbins (2005) further demonstrated the limited attention reporters focused on rhetorical strategies. Robbins filed a story about local reaction to Bush’s Tucson speech, but he reported on the reactions of average Tucsonans, rather than the Republican lawmakers his colleague David Greene had isolated as the intended audience of the speech. Confusing the issue further, Robbins reported on the opinions of those who were protesting the Iraq War, and did not see Bush’s speech, before summarizing the overall local reaction to the speech in Tucson as a prevailing feeling that “solving the Iraq problem may seem easier than coming up with a solution to the problem of immigration reform” (para. 20). Such reports contain no substantive analysis.

Republican support was seen as the goal of Bush’s rhetoric throughout media coverage of the early phase of his push. CIR had “divided Republicans” (Stevenson, 2005, para. 1), which forced Bush to emphasize “the elements that most concerned conservatives in his own party” (para. 3). Bush’s support of the issue was almost universally described as “an opportunity to strengthen his party’s appeal to Hispanics, a fast-growing segment of the population” (para. 19). As coverage of CIR unfolded, the national news media continually elided any ideological basis for Republican intransigence, preferring a simple narrative pitting good against evil.

Fletcher and Fears (2005) wrote one of the few reports covering Bush's speech in Tucson that discussed his rhetoric, noting that "Bush put his rhetorical emphasis on measures sought by many Republicans fearful of swelling illegal immigration" (para. 2), but reached the conclusion that Bush's rhetoric was likely to fail because "the President faces an uphill battle in the House and Senate to realize his vision of reform, which is drawing intense skepticism from many allies in his own party who believe his approach is not tough enough" (para. 4). While their analysis separated Bush from other Republicans, and mentions his rhetoric, they offered no meaningful analysis.

The gamesmanship model effectively describes the day-to-day coverage of Bush's rhetoric, in which journalists would report that he made a speech, explain the political situation, and then ignore the actual speech making in favor of reporting on the horse race, particularly as Bush's push for CIR dragged on. *Fox News* called Bush's rhetorical efforts an attempt "to unify a fractious Republican Party headed to midterm elections" ("Bush outlines border," 2005, para. 1), while Rachel Swarns argued that members of the "Republican Party are responding to... the demographic shift driven by immigration in recent decades" (2006, para. 4), for fear of losing political ground among the swelling Latino demographic.

Media efforts to couch immigration rhetoric in terms of gamesmanship were not limited to the early stages of Bush's reform efforts. When summarizing Bush's push for CIR, Donna Smith (2007) mentioned division in American opinion and observed that Bush had worked behind-the-scenes on compromise, but ultimately concluded that the bill failed due to Republican intransigence. What little coverage the messages received during the year-long push was reduced to a brief mention in Smith's report for *Reuters*, where she cited unnamed "analysts," who attributed the failure to the clouding of the issue by partisan "think tanks and lobbyists as

well as...journalists and talk-show hosts and the free-wheeling exchanges of internet blogs” (para. 11).

Smith’s analysis underlined the problems in press coverage of the time. While press reporting is useful for providing context and data indicating that Bush’s rhetoric failed to resonate with the audience for which it was intended, it did not contain any significant rhetorical analysis. At the same time, the idea that powerful media agents outside of the mainstream were able to create disinformation and confusion, particularly among the right, highlights the need for careful academic research in order to understand how Bush failed to prevent this conservative backlash.

A single rhetorical issue that did receive attention highlights the confusion the public had with the issue, and the difficulty the news media had in ameliorating that confusion. The term “amnesty” became incredibly popular from 2005 through 2007, particularly among Republicans, who were responsible for 75% of its usage (Capitolwords.org). Writing for *The New York Times* in early 2005, as the stage was being set for Bush’s push, David Kirkpatrick reported that “many conservatives call the president's ideas 'amnesty' -- a term Mr. Bush disputes -- because his plan includes ways for currently illegal immigrants to obtain temporary worker permits” (para. 3).

Woodruff (2014) found lawmakers’ definition of the term to be much looser than Kirkpatrick described. “The word is typically shorthand for ‘bad immigration policy,’” she found, and “asking if a Republican supports amnesty is akin to asking if someone is beating his or her spouse; it’s a loaded term, and the correct answer is always no” (para. 4). Congressional Republicans were “downright befuddled when asked to explain what that concept looks like in real life” (Woodruff, 2014, para. 3), even as they continued to use the word frequently. Less befuddled was then-Republican Senator and author of the Senate version of CIR Arlen Specter,

who helpfully translated the Republicans' language: "This word 'amnesty' is a code word. It is a code word to try to smear good-faith legislation" (Milbank, 2006, para 5). As often as the word was used, the media rarely pushed Republicans to explain their meaning, in spite of its seemingly nefarious purpose. In an environment of confusion, Republicans were able to use a devil term to steer debate.

At the same time that media reports on immigration reform elided policy concerns and ignored confusing terms that obfuscated the nature of the policy. In fact, media reporting of immigrants bemoaned Americans' confusion about immigrants themselves. Illegal immigrants were obscured from public view, because they were "living in the Shadows," as the title of a *San Diego Union-Tribune* essay series proclaims (Breen, 2010). Unlike other populations, whose children assimilated in schools, illegal children were "growing up in the shadows" (Gavett, 2011), according to the title of a PBS documentary series. Seemingly oblivious to the ubiquity of the metaphor, CNN (Myreport, 2013), the *New York Times* (Cave, 2014), and many others titled articles using the metaphor of the shadows.

The repetition of the idea that immigrants are metaphorically shadowed from public view suggests that immigrants must be brought into the light to be seen, and only through heroic courage on the part of journalists can the general public see the situation at all. Shadows evoke additional meanings, of course, including danger, particularly the danger of Latino violence against Anglos (Chavez, 2008), and ignorance, particularly Latino ignorance in contrast to Anglo enlightenment (Birria, 2012), implying the tension between mystery and fear people experience when the Other is simultaneously unknown and nearby (Cunningham-Parmeter, 2011). Overwhelmingly, the use of the shadows in the title of a news article implies that the journalists are the ones that braved the danger, and did so to enlighten a confused Anglo audience. The

repeated metaphor of the shadows highlights the low-information media environment surrounding immigration reform, and how journalists' work in that environment contributed to their viewers' confusion. To come full circle, one report on the death of immigration reform used the shadows to discuss the political maneuvering on Capitol Hill, juxtaposing the gamesmanship of Republicans with fearful Democrats, who were learning "cowering in the shadows is a bust" (Trujillo, 2006, para. 7).

### **The Rhetoric of George W. Bush**

A significant amount of research exists regarding George W. Bush and his rhetorical efforts, unsurprising for a two-term president who presided over a recent period of turmoil and war. The study of Bush's immigration rhetoric is more rare than discussion of other topics, because of the primacy of terror and war. As Edwards and Herder (2012) lament, "although rhetoricians have demonstrated a clear interest in what presidents have to say about immigrants and immigration we have relatively few sustained studies on the subject" (p. 42). This section begins by discussing the general criticism of Bush as an orator and leader to determine themes within Bush's overall rhetoric that may prove relevant to the study of immigration reform. Once the general perspective is outlined, this section will turn to the limited research into Bush's push for CIR, demonstrating how the ideological criticism of Bush's discourse has shaped the study of this specific rhetorical moment.

A popular criticism of Bush centered on his perceived willingness to evade the truth. Harnett and Mercieca (2007), for example, argued that Bush described fantasy, rather than reality, confounding the study of his rhetoric. Condit (2010) similarly decried Bush's unwillingness to report the truth in Abu Ghraib, and his apology for those transgressions promised the truth at the same time it obfuscated it from the American people (Shepard, 2007).

Walter Johnson (2006) claimed that Bush was unable to meet the standards of historical truth when he apologized for slavery, re-entrenching a history of domination. Hyde (2005) explained how Bush's inability to confront the truth behind the historical relationship between the United States and the Arab world prevented him from achieving rhetorical heroism. In each of these cases, rhetorical critics were trying to make sense of a President who says something that seems false, or who omits counterfactual truths of which he is aware, as a strategy of obfuscation. These critics found that in cases where the truth is difficult for Bush, he evades it as much as he can, a damning ethical lapse for the leader of a democracy.

For Bush, the truth that he told was often based in the certainty of faith. Bush often evaded "fact-based reality," according to Ron Suskind (2004), instead opting to deal with certainty based on a "weird, Messianic idea of what he thinks God has told him to do" (para. 2). Certainty is built into what Suskind called a faith-based presidency, in which rhetoric supersedes the real world. Such a faith-based approach makes it difficult for a critic to create an objective space in which to evaluate the rhetoric of Bush because "open dialogue, based on facts, is not seen as something of inherent value. It may, in fact, create doubt, which undercuts faith. It could result in a loss of confidence in the decision-maker and, just as important, by the decision-maker" (Suskind, para. 24).

Bush's "messianic militarist" (Smith, 2006, p. 367) faith was a particular, individualistic riff on the melody of protestant Christianity that was more closely aligned with Joel Osteen than Jimmy Carter (Smith, 2006, p. 375). This faith was broad enough to consistently incorporate Republican themes (Milkis & Rhodes, 2007), and flexible enough to adapt to a variety of contexts (Roof, 2009). For those who preferred a truth that was supported by the bedrock of the almighty, Bush's religious certainty was a welcome alternative from objective reality. For those

who preferred the skeptical, rational truth of Jefferson and Locke, the opacity of Bush's faith was frustrating.

Religion is hardly the only ideological division in Bush's rhetoric, as outlined by Mary Stuckey (2013): "No single political figure presents a clearer marker of the intensity, the depth, and the implacability of the partisanship governing our communal life than George W. Bush" (p.578), Central to all of those divisions is Bush's epistemology. Superlatives and hyperbole are in no short supply, with Hartnett and Mercieca (2007) declaring that Bush's epistemology represented no less than "the death of presidential rhetoric" and a paradigm shift to "the post-rhetorical presidency" (pp. 599-600). Not to be outdone, Porpora et al. (2013) argued that the paradigm shift Bush represented went beyond the function of the presidency, creating a "post-ethical society" (p. 1). David Domke (2004) did not see a paradigm shift, but argued that the fundamentalist frame at the heart of Bush's rhetoric was pure evil, concluding that the president saw the 9/11 attacks "in a positive light" because the crisis gave him "a larger piece of the planet to work with" (pp. 177-8). For Domke, "the ultimate irony" of Bush's rhetoric is that it "looks, sounds, and feels remarkably similar to terrorists it is fighting" (179). Perhaps the "ultimate irony" of Domke's criticism is that by equating Bush and Bin Laden, his research "looks, sounds, and feels remarkably similar" to the fundamentalist dogma it is fighting.

Because the aim of this study is to see how Bush failed to rally conservative support for a moderate, populist piece of legislation, in spite of having every possible advantage in doing so, this paper may be uniquely positioned to answer Stuckey's call, which asks scholars to use Bush's rhetoric "as a starting point from which we can begin to understand the contemporary conservative movement and the rifts that threaten to fracture it," because "the ideological fault lines" (2013, p. 578) that plague conservatism to this day began with Bush's rhetoric. To that



end, this project looks at a moment Bush attempted to defend “a rational middle ground” (Bush, 2010, p. 303) between the ideological poles of “an automatic path to citizenship” and “a program of mass deportation.”

The previous study most similar to this one comes from Edwards and Herder (2012), but operates from an ideological perspective based on the idea that Bush pursued immigration reform as an act of political gamesmanship, cynically hoping to lure Latinos into the GOP’s big tent. Their study is an important work of criticism that clearly outlines key frames in Bush’s rhetoric, but by proceeding from their ideological position, they built a model of rhetorical action that disregards rhetorical progression and unfairly equates conservatism with nativism.

A less ideological study of Bush’s push for CIR comes from Souders and Dillard (2014), who placed Bush’s immigration address in Irvine, California within the larger context of Bush’s security rhetoric. While they did not reference Goodnight (1986), their findings were similar to the idea that rhetorical trajectories serve as a barrier and prevent the audience from understanding subtle adjustments the speaker makes. They also examined an overlooked tension within frame models between top-down models that assume frames originate with the gatekeeper, who provides them to the audience, and bottom-up models that assume the audience provides the frames, and the gatekeeper’s role is to invite the audience to select among them.

This study extends their work. It places the Irvine speech into the context of Bush’s overall immigration rhetoric, in order to explain how the themes he used in that speech were a response to earlier efforts at reform. It also looks at later immigration rhetoric to study how Bush’s rhetoric developed over the course of his push for CIR.

## **Framing and the Information Environment**

Research focused on media framing, from Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet (1948) to Luntz (2007), contends that factors in selecting and presenting news stories have discernible effects on viewers' attitudes toward the subject of media coverage (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), although the extent, limits, and direction of those effects are not as well understood (Druckman and Holmes, 2004). A 2007 issue of *Journal of Communication* was devoted to creating conceptual clarity among three of the key issues within media effects - framing, agenda setting, and priming - yet the distinction between the three is still murky (Souders & Dillard, 2014). Generally, framing refers to the process by which information gatekeepers explain an issue to an audience (Goffman, 1974; Scheufele, 1999), agenda setting is the process by which the relative emphasis information gatekeepers place on various topics influences the salience, or importance, audience members ascribe to those topics (Baumgartner & Jones, 2010; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990), and priming is the process by which those same factors affect the valence audiences feel towards a topic (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). The process of explaining a complicated issue necessarily prioritizes some aspects of an issue over another (Vatz, 1973).

Immigration is an issue in which the linguistic choices of information gatekeepers have special significance. As Lakoff and Ferguson note to begin their 2006 study, "Framing is at the center of the recent immigration debate. Simply framing it as about immigration has shaped its politics, defining what count as 'problems' and constraining the debate to a narrow set of issues" (2006, p. 1). Many scholars have heeded Lazarsfeld's (1948) warning that the language choices of media gatekeepers are not value free when they discuss immigration, whether the research those scholars produce has come from a rhetorical perspective (Coutin & Chock, 1996), from a

policy analysis perspective (Demo, 2004), or from the legal perspective (Brabeck et al., 2011).

When comparing the studies of immigrants, immigration, and immigration reform within communication studies or political science journals, the quantity of scholarship primarily focused on media framing dwarfs all other immigration research combined.

In the information-poor environment of immigration reform, frames often help audiences fill in missing information, which can ease cognitive dissonance (Dardis et al., 2008), define a social problem (Kim & Willis, 2007), or simplify a complex situation (Allen et al., 1994). Generally, when media framing creates an explanatory frame, it creates an organizing theme to combine discrete information into a unified idea (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006; Gitlin, 1979), which may create or evoke a terministic screen (Burke, 1966) for the audience, often outside of the speaker's control (Druckman and Holmes, 2004; Ceren, 2006). As the media chooses which issues to make more or less salient, those issues rise to prominence as central concerns in the debate over illegal immigration, or fall away as unexamined and unimportant effluvium.

Crime was one of the primary problems media gatekeepers consistently associated with illegal immigration. When associated with the free flow of criminals into the United States, immigration becomes a more clear and salient issue than when discussed in the context of other problems (Marsh, 1991; Reiner et al., 2000). Drug smuggling, human trafficking, and other violent crimes are often linked to illegal immigration (Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007, p. 37), negatively slanting the portrayal of immigrants (Dunaway et al., 2007), which scholars speculate can create or increase a fear and distrust of immigrants (Kim et al., 2011).

Edwards and Herder (2012) demonstrated that economic concerns were often used to frame immigration. Mayda (2006) showed the power of the economic frame, because the fear of losing one's job could focus audience attention more than virtually any other economic issue.

While most commonly employed to vilify illegal immigrants, the economic frame can be used to justify their value as well, by framing economic issues around an employer's need for cheap labor (Tichenor, 2008) or by using immigrant labor to justify their inclusion in American life (Sainsbury, 2006).

While framing is an effective tool for explaining media effect in many settings, it is less effective on immigration reform. Even the use of a seemingly innocuous term like "immigration reform," Lakoff and Ferguson (2006, p. 2) argued, can prescribe a course of action for an audience. However, "Immigration reform" is, in practice, an innocuous phrase. It is a phrase that describes policy action and prescribes a legal solution, because governmental policy is synonymous with law. Their definition of the legal frame is overly general, failing to distinguish between the legal settings of a courtroom or a legislative body. Their definition of the legal frame is also overly limited, only including illegal immigrants and agencies that deal with them, even though any version of a legal frame ought to imply many more actors.

Secondly, while Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) demonstrate the difficulty immigration presents when creating a theoretical definition, Kim et al. (2011) highlight the methodological difficulty social-scientific scholars have when discussing CIR. As the number of illegal immigrants living in the United States doubled in the decade preceding Bush's push for immigration reform (Krogstad & Passel, 2014), news coverage of illegal immigration increased nine fold or more, with a similarly high proportion of that media coverage depicting immigrants negatively (Kim et al., 2007, p. 304). Kim and his colleagues, however, found no reason to suspect that the negative framing of immigrants resulted in a change in audience attitudes towards immigration reform. Instead, they found an odd disjunction between media coverage of the problems associated with illegal immigration and the solutions to those problems. In the

newspaper and television reports they studied, “Immigration Reform” and “Tougher Border Control,” were the two most commonly discussed solutions, but the problems to which they applied, “Failure of Immigration System” and “Weak Border Control,” were among the least commonly mentioned problems (pp. 303-4).

Research into presidential framing has similar problems, including overly specific frames unlikely to be observed by the audience, the unchecked assumption that unfavorable images of immigrants would affect audience attitudes towards immigration reform efforts, and limited discussion of contextual factors that might account for audience effects. Most importantly, studies of framing do not focus in detail on the speeches in question, do not systematically analyze the rhetorical situation, and fail to account for rhetorical progression over time.

As the limitations of frame research for studying CIR have become clear, alternatives have arisen. Cisneros (2008) combined framing with analysis of metaphoric clusters, which are “more than linguistic ornamentation,” because they “affect political behavior and cognition” (Cisneros, 2008, p. 570). On immigration, Cisneros (2008) highlighted the use of metaphors of dirtiness and pollution regarding immigrants. Building off previous studies showing “dominant assumptions about the danger of ‘illegal’ immigration by focusing on nativist, racist, and xenophobic justifications for immigration restriction,” (p. 571), including work by Kent Ono and John Sloop (2002), who studied the nativist metaphors of California’s proposition 187, and Otto Santa Ana (1999), who offered a broad taxonomy of metaphoric clusters, Cisneros extended the scope of analysis to visual metaphors and nature, explaining that contemporary discourse treated immigrants as an unnatural pollutant. It is unclear if the audience actually associated immigrants with images of toxic waste, but by mapping connections, Cisneros and other ideological critics

can help explain how messages connect with each other to associate seemingly unrelated factors in a single, coherent frame.

Another variant of framing research focused on moral frames based in orthodoxy or progressiveness, building from the work of Lakoff and various collaborators (Lakoff, 1996; 2014; Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Lakoff & The Rockridge Institute, 2006). Mayda (2006) explained that material concerns regarding immigration are often outweighed by moral concerns, particularly when viewed in the context of preexisting moral frameworks. News agencies are often uncomfortable discussing moral or spiritual issues, due to standards of journalistic objectivity, and therefore were constrained to discussing immigration as a purely material concern. Academic research has no such constraints, and deep moral frames have been used to discuss Bush's religious rhetoric in the 2004 election (Spielvogel, 2005) and how other powerful information gatekeepers have framed immigrants.

While no study currently connects deep moral frames with George W. Bush's push for CIR, Levasseur et al (2011) discussed how such frames, when employed by other information gatekeepers, place immigrants outside the national family, and unworthy of the same attention of natural-born citizens. This study will extend work by Levasseur et al. to presidential immigration discourse and generally connect Lakoff et al.'s work to a social movement structure to see how an invitation to participate in a frame can evolve or progress over time. Overall, framing research provides useful information on how the audience understood immigration reform, but adds little to the analysis of Bush's rhetorical strategies on the issue.

### **Audience Factors**

While chapter one introduced several key polls - and polls of polls - from the time of Bush's push for CIR (Pew, 2006; Segovia & Defever, 2010; Muste, 2013), the agencies in

charge of such polls rarely, if ever, segregated their findings across audience identity factors or held those factors constant over time. When Segovia and Defever (2010) argued, “the public appears conflicted and ambivalent about immigration” (p. 376), they did so without indicating the importance of audience division across political party. On most controversial issues, the American public is conflicted and ambivalent if looked at as a whole.

Academic research into audience is better, but also incomplete. Generally, research looking at identity factors as a predictor of audience attitudes has focused on white and native-born attitudes towards immigrants (Leighley, 2001; Johnson, Stein & Wrinkle, 2003), finding stark splits in the salience of immigration based on geography and religion. While these studies generally control for race, they do so in limited ways, either constructing race as a binary between Hispanics and Anglos or between Hispanics and all other races, taking party membership as a given, often failing to mention it entirely. With these limitations in mind, findings on geography and religion offer insight into audience predispositions, providing a deeper context than the explanation of audience from chapter one, and constructing a starting point for narrower explanations of the situated audiences for each of Bush’s addresses in the analysis chapters to come.

In each stage of Bush’s push for CIR, Bush chose to deliver a large-scale national address in Arizona, California, or Florida, suggesting that border states were key to addressing his audience, because border state residents had more in common with each other than with they did with the rest of the country. According to previous research, border state residence is a key predictor of audience attitudes towards immigration, either due to a perceived threat from outside forces entering border communities (Quillian, 1995; Alba, Rumbaut, & Marotz, 2005) or through the understanding that stems from personal experience (Pettigrew, 1998, 2006; Dixon, 2006;

Oliver & Wong, 2003). Studies of the time in which Bush spoke indicate that local news in border states was more likely to focus on crime (Branton & Dunaway, 2009a; 2009b) than any other aspect of illegal immigration, constraining Bush's rhetoric among local audiences.

A second key determinant of audience attitudes toward immigration is religious ideology. Wuthnow (1988) and Hunter (1991) contended that the major split in American religious ideology that affects political attitudes is not between religious denominations, but between "traditionalists," who are generally more faithful to normative religious practices and "modernists," who are less likely to allow religion to prescribe their political or social stances. Knoll (2009) found a significant positive relationship between traditionalist religious behaviors and liberal attitudes towards immigration reform, suggesting that religiosity has as profound of an effect on attitudes as "socioeconomic characteristics, economic perceptions, and racial/ethnic context" (p. 329). Overall, Knoll offered strong evidence that individuals "take into consideration undocumented immigrants when they ask themselves the biblical query: "And who is my neighbor?" (p. 329).

## **Conclusion**

The review of literature suggests that illegal immigration represents a series of interconnected problems, with solutions often at odds with each other. Public understanding is crafted through a series of media and presidential lenses simultaneously clarifying and obfuscating debate. Into this heated and confusing crossfire, George W. Bush entered with the baggage of an ideologue, under attack as a partisan, a liar, and a demagogue. Media coverage of his efforts fails to account for his rhetorical efforts on the subject, preferring to look at the process of a bill becoming law, but his messaging is important and worthy of academic consideration.



Academic discussion of George W. Bush on the topic of immigration reform presents several rhetorical dimensions of interest. Presidential framing suggests the potential power of narrowing discussion, while constitutive rhetoric suggests the power of broadening discussion. More recent framing research highlights the difference between top-down and bottom-up models of speaker-audience interactions, highlighting through analogy a similar split between top-down constitutive efforts on behalf of the president and bottom-up models of civic engagement. Research into audience attitudes towards immigration suggests a split between material problems and moral solutions in the minds of Americans, although that split has received little academic attention. Previous studies have collapsed these dimensions, focusing only on one side of each, due to the ideological blinders critics have when they discuss Bush or the limitations of the theories they use to study his rhetoric. By proceeding inductively, and tying Bush's rhetoric to the rhetorical situation, this study will create a holistic view of Bush's rhetoric on CIR.

### **Chapter Three: A Rhetoric of Borrowed Heroism**

When George W. Bush delivered “The Future of Immigration Reform” in Tucson, Arizona on November 28, 2005, he touched on themes of crime, security, and American values, while praising the collection of Border Patrol agents who had gathered to hear him speak. Bush tied border security to crime, largely ignoring the economic benefits of immigration that dominated his immigration rhetoric throughout his first term, and toning down the calls for compassion that marked his discussion of the topic during the 2000 presidential election campaign. While those earlier themes remained in his 2005 address, crime and security were much more central to his rhetoric. Bush referred to the disparate policy ideas around border security and a temporary worker program only in general terms, because the details of the bills Congress was prepared to consider were still in the early stages of negotiation, but he made clear that he favored an approach that balanced border security with Democrat-friendly provisions, even as the speech heavily featured crime.

#### **Purpose**

The purposes of rhetoric in the inception stage of a social movement is generally understood, having changed little from Griffin’s (1952) writing to Stewart et al.’s (2007). Those purposes include garnering attention for a cause, developing consensus about the nature of the problem, and motivating potential followers to join the movement or increase their commitment. President-driven movements have additional burdens in the inception stage, because the president has to demonstrate that the problem cannot be solved by acting within the system. Presidents are often expected to provide a solution along with developing consensus regarding the problem.

In Tucson, Bush needed to fulfill all of the purposes of social movements and satisfy the additional burdens of president-driven movements. To do so, his primary purpose was to lay the groundwork for a common understanding of immigration, which could garner attention and develop consensus. Bush's second purpose was demonstrating the need for a social movement, which involved creating a perception of governmental inaction that would justify his acting outside the system, articulating the need for audience involvement, and constructing Bush as the most appropriate leader for the nascent social movement.

A final purpose for Bush stems from going public's media framing function, in which strategies that appear public facing are often "designed largely to influence the media" because "media 'translate' presidential messages and influence how they are understood by ordinary citizens" (Zarefsky, 2004, 611). While chapter two questioned the overall effectiveness of presidential and media framing, media-facing strategies of going public can be particularly effective at influencing local media coverage (Cohen, 2010), partially due to a change in strategy resulting from the limited success recent presidents have had "going national" (P.4). Skeptics of going public, like George Edwards (2003), support the notion that the strategy can affect media coverage, and Kim et al. (2011) highlight that local media coverage of immigration varies wildly from national coverage, supporting the idea that Bush's media-facing strategies of going public may have been designed to influence his local audience through media coverage.

### **Barriers**

Consensus is rare in the inception period, even under ideal circumstances, and chapter one highlighted how the circumstances surrounding immigration reform were far from ideal. Illegal immigration was seen variously as a criminal problem, an economic problem, and a humanitarian problem, although individual audience members were likely to see those concerns

as contradictory and exclusive, often supporting one perspective of the problem while discounting others. Local support for comprehensive reform efforts was made more elusive by local attitudes that closely associated immigrants with violent crimes, often ignoring economic or humanitarian concerns along the border.

Illegal immigration was a particularly salient issue in America at the time, as explained in chapter one, but the issue was even more consequential to those living in border communities. As an issue's salience increases, so do the limits on what an audience will accept from presidential rhetoric (Rottinghaus, 2006), often leading presidents to change their public stance on an issue or ignore it entirely, suggesting that when discussing illegal immigration, Bush had to define problems and solutions from among options already familiar to his audience and do so very carefully. Bush needed to focus on crime, because Arizonans were particularly focused on that aspect of immigration as evidenced by local media coverage. In every month of 2005, at least one issue of *The Arizona Daily Star* featured a front-page story about immigrants committing crimes, and for most months, the newspaper featured several. In addition to human trafficking and the illegal drug trade, Arizonans read about a variety of other crimes associated with illegal immigrants in 2005. Immigrants were sexually assaulting children ("British immigrant arrested," 2005), trafficking in human body parts (Hays, 2005) and endangering locals with hit-kill-and-run accidents (Tobin & Ellis, 2005).

Multiple proposals in both chambers of Congress contributed to audience confusion about competing policies, and Bush needed to strike a delicate balance between articulating a clear immigration problem and a solution that would include all of the provisions he wanted. He could not downplay criminal concerns, because if he did, his argument would not justify the significant increase in border security that his plan outlined. He also could not use the

Manichean frame typically associated with foreign criminals, depicting a moral struggle between “good” citizens and “evil” immigrants, because vilifying immigrants would risk losing support for the temporary worker program and path to citizenship he favored. Essentially, he could not insist on any single problem representing the fundamental nature of the controversy surrounding immigrants, because to do so would invalidate his call for a comprehensive program addressing many issues at once.

Focusing audience attention was difficult for Bush, and one of the primary difficulties he faced stemmed from a lack of a salient, striking event around which he could focus his rhetoric. While more immigrants had died crossing the border in 2005 than any previous year (Hendricks, 2005), few Americans noticed or cared. Even fewer seemed concerned that the deadline for the 1986 amnesty was approaching in December, and that no replacement policy was in place (Prengaman, 2005). Americans were unconcerned with the salient events affecting immigrants; they were concerned with how immigrants affected American life. Unfortunately for those who wanted immigration to receive public attention, there had been no specific crisis that could be tied directly to immigrants, there was no Elian Gonzalez to put a face on immigrant concerns, and even the terrorists responsible for the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> were in the country legally. Somehow, the illegal immigrant population in America had doubled, but it had done so through slow accumulation over half a century, with no clearer explanation than life was better north of the Rio Grande (Economist, 2005).

With Congress developing immigration proposals, Bush needed to act quickly, but without a salient event around which he could develop his rhetoric, it was difficult to maintain his audience’s attention and ease their confusion. Bush’s previous immigration rhetoric had failed to overcome audience barriers of attention and confusion stemming from local attitudes

and media coverage, often addressing immigration in national speeches while downplaying or ignoring the criminal concerns with which border communities were preoccupied.

Unsurprisingly, he had failed to generate public support on the issue. In Tucson, he needed a new approach.

### **Strategic Patterns**

With the president's purpose and barriers understood, it is important to consider the strategies he used to overcome those barriers. Generally, "The Future of Immigration Reform" is divided into three sections, with the first two explaining that increased border security could curb illegal crossing and return illegal immigrants to their countries of origin. The third major section focused on the benefits of a guest worker program, explaining the effectiveness such a policy would have in supporting border security efforts and improving the economy. As a whole, the speech operated from a thesis that illegal immigration forced America to choose between welcoming newcomers and upholding laws, and that CIR would allow America to do both.

Within that broad framework, Bush used a variety of more subtle strategies to redefine illegal immigration and the players within reform efforts. First, he wanted to define himself as heroic, by associating his actions with those of the Border Patrol. Next, he wanted to make Congress into villains, describing them as out of touch bureaucrats, associating them with human smugglers, and dissociating them from American values. Finally, he wanted to expand the definition of citizenship to include immigrants who embraced American values, so that the righteousness of his cause would be readily apparent for his audience. To do so, he constructed a conflict between Border Patrol agents and the smugglers of illegal immigrants, generally referred to as coyotes, playing out at along the border, into which he could place immigrants, political opponents, and himself, creating new associations that redefined each of the stakeholders.

David Zarefsky (2004) explained that “by defining a situation,” presidents “might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public” (Zarefsky, 2004, p. 611), which is particularly important at the outset of a movement, when the president has to define the “events” precipitating the movement and the “proposals” for solving the problem to which the movement responds. Stewart et al. (2007) provided some insights into how movement leaders articulate the movement itself, many of which are tied to strategies of presidential definition. Movements seek “to replace existing norms and values with *new* ones” (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 12) that show the movement’s “cause as one that any virtuous individual may endorse” (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 15), suggesting that the definition Bush offered would need to define the norms and values of the status quo as faulty, while those tied to his movement were plainly virtuous, in order to convince the public that their actions could effect change in a way that Bush could not.

While Bush’s redefinition of immigration explained “the clusters of what goes with what” (Burke, 1973, p. 77) he also organized the Tucson address along a progressive form to show his audience the development “from what to what” (Burke, 1973, p. 82). Rhetorical form “is an arousing and fulfillment of desires” (Burke, 1968, p. 124), and progressive form can influence “the audience to anticipate or desire certain developments” (Burke, 1968, p. 54) rather than others. To do so, Bush used a familiar situation to explain the perspective from which his audience should view illegal immigration, and then applied that scenario to increasingly unfamiliar situations.

**Locality as a worldview.** Redefining immigration reform was a large task. The first step in doing so was to develop a cognitive schema that was flexible enough to explain a variety of scenarios while remaining simple enough for his audience to accept. Bush created a

definitional worldview that favored local knowledge and urged his audience to use their experience to evaluate policy options by demonstrating that his proposal was common sense and had a tangible effect locally. Bush wanted “straight-forward” (para. 16) and “common sense” (para. 17) reforms “that people of Arizona will like” (para. 39). Bush had already passed policies that had an effect “in Tucson” (para. 24) or “in Arizona” (para. 28), “making people who live close to the border more secure” (para. 27), while Congress needed to end “senseless rules” (para. 19) that created a “cycle of endless litigation” (para 20), obstructing justice.

Bush cited his experience as a border-state governor to build credibility and identification early in his speech, telling his audience “as a former governor, I know that enforcing the law and the border is especially important to the communities along the border” (para. 7). Bush further built his credibility by consistently associating himself with the Border Patrol, the most local part of the immigration apparatus. Bush demonstrated his relationship with the Border Patrol, explaining that he had passed policies to increase their funding (para. 8), hire more agents (para. 22), and provide them cutting-edge technology (para. 24). Working to connect himself to the Border Patrol and local communities, he explained that the bulk of the Border Patrol agents he hired would “be assigned right here in the state of Arizona” (para. 22).

Bush established that local knowledge was the best way to understand illegal immigration. He associated himself with locals through being a border-state governor and through the Border Patrol, creating a close network of positive identifications among the three. Once he had associated himself, the Border Patrol, and border communities in a cluster around locality, a final way that Bush created a worldview in the speech was by using distance to mark his progressive form. He discussed immigration as a conflict in a variety of scenarios,



dissociating local conflict from national ones, creating separate levels on which the conflict of immigration reform could play out.

**Local Conflict.** The most salient problem locals associated with illegal immigration was crime, and Bush had little choice but to establish the conflict between police and criminals as the setting for conflict. He had to show his audience that his plan would stop crime before any other concerns could be addressed.

Bush's depiction of the scenario at the border involved recasting which parties were associated with which roles in a traditional conflict built around crime. Traditionally, illegal immigrants were described in criminal scenarios as outsiders who committed property crimes, perpetrated acts of violence, joined gangs, or similarly harmed society (Edwards & Herder, 2012). Residents of border communities were the victims of crime in those scenarios.

Bush discussed crime very differently. He granted that the presence of illegal immigrants broke the law in general terms, but he denied them the agency to commit specific crimes or inflict harm, and he associated the danger of crime with other actors. In Bush's scenario, immigrants were victims of forces outside their control, unlikely to harm locals. His first reference to illegal immigrants was "those who enter the country illegally violate the law" (para. 6), a phrase that simultaneously renders judgment that immigrants are acting illegally while attributing criminal acts to events, rather than a state of being within immigrants. Coyotes, he explained, were the ones who brought "illegal immigrants across the border," blaming the presence of illegal immigrants on the smugglers, simultaneously dehumanizing the immigrants and stripping them of agency. Those "vicious human-smugglers" were the ones who brought "crime to our neighborhoods and danger to the highways" (para. 7). Coyotes' motivations were sinister, unlike illegal immigrants, whose desire to be in America demonstrated their similarity to

natural-born citizens. Immigrants were trying to access “schools and hospitals” (para. 7), do “an honest day’s labor” (para. 35) to “provide for their families” (para. 34), and uphold American values including “liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God and tolerance for others” (para. 42).

Blame is incredibly powerful, as social scientists working on attribution theory have confirmed since Fritz Heider’s seminal (1944) “Social perception and phenomenal causality,” even when used implicitly. Unfortunately for Bush, subtlety is not an effective strategy when attributing criminality in a high-salience environment (Miller, Burgoon & Hall, 2007), particularly when framing illegal immigration (Hayes, 2008). He chose not to make the overt claim that coyotes were the root of crime, in fact he did not use the word coyote at all.

Throughout the speech he repeated the same subtle pattern that dissociated immigrants and dangerous crimes; whenever he discussed a crime that harmed local communities, he did so while removing agency for the crime from the immigrants themselves. For example, when discussing illegal immigrants returned to local communities through catch and release programs, he mentioned “murderers, rapists, child molesters, and other violent criminals” (para. 19), but did not identify them as illegal immigrants, instead using the unnecessarily impersonal and extremely clunky phrase “those whom we’re forced to release have included” (para. 19), implying that many who were released were not criminals, and the criminals were forced onto local communities by a faceless and uncaring bureaucratic system. Unfortunately for Bush, it also placed immigrants in close association with murderers, rapists, and child molesters, which made the cognitive leap between immigrants and criminals much simpler than one which avoided the connection. Similarly, when Bush discussed Border Patrol successes, he dissociated immigrants from crime. He claimed that when the Border Patrol found drugs “on the border”

(para. 23), they also found immigrants, as if the two were helpless chattel being smuggled by an outside party, but his audience was far more likely to pick up on the close association between immigrants and drugs than they were to follow Bush's direct association to a nameless third party. Even when illegal immigration "put pressure" (para. 7) on government agencies, Bush argues that government agencies were distant and faceless, and offered no specific scenarios in which immigrants hurt local communities.

It would have been much simpler, and far more striking, for Bush to blame immigrants in each scenario. An audience would be more likely to support border security if immigrants were murderers, rapists, and drug smugglers. Immigrants would seem far more alien if he ignored their children, or demonstrated that those children hurt educational outcomes for natural-born children. As outsiders, they could easily be accused of subverting American values, justifying a variety of actions. In his terror rhetoric, he had no problem making many of those claims, often to great success. Bush's choice to make immigrants passive participants was intentional, and it came at a cost.

In Bush's version of the local conflict, the heroic police force tasked with combating coyotes was the Border Patrol. Unlike immigrants, the Border Patrol was vivid, personal, and full of action and agency. They were the direct audience to whom Bush gave the speech, represented on the stage through their leadership and through the presence of helicopters. Bush praised their dedication, "working around the clock" (para. 2) to keep local communities safe. Border Patrol agents were brave, honorable, and effective, consistently combating coyotes, many of whom had criminal records (para. 8).

Bush established himself as the leader of the Border Patrol, arguing that their effectiveness came from his financial and technological support (para. 24). Border Patrol agents'

bravery and values were similar to Bush's, who had "a solemn duty" to protect the country "every single day" (para. 5). When the Border Patrol devoted themselves to protecting "our nation, our Constitution, and our laws" (para. 5), they did so as an extension of Bush's personal devotion.

**National conflict.** On a national scale, illegal immigration was depicted as a conflict between the executive agencies tasked with controlling illegal immigration and a faceless system that undermined those agencies' success. Generally, Bush laid out a variety of scenarios in which executive agencies created a good plan, agents of that plan worked in good faith, and then the nonsensical demands of a faceless bureaucracy prevented any change. On the national level, the conflict needed a villain, and Bush suggested his audience view large corporations, foreign governments and Congress similarly to how the audience viewed coyotes, as sinister agents exploiting immigrants and locals.

One scenario in which Bush highlighted the national dimension of immigration conflict was his worksite enforcement far from the border, in which distant and impersonal institutions used immigrants to generate profits, in violation of American values. Bush directly associated the worksite enforcement scenario with local conflict, developing a progression from border security to interior enforcement and another progression from interior enforcement to work site enforcement. "Better interior enforcement begins with better work site enforcement" (para. 29), Bush explained, and "border security and interior enforcement go hand in hand" (para. 32).

In the worksite scenario, businesses were put in the place of coyotes, subverting American values through profiting off of illegal immigrants. Businesses, like the coyotes, retained the agency necessary to commit the crime, and immigrants were again helpless pawns.

Corporations were taking advantage of a broken system, ignoring their “obligation to abide by the law” (para. 29).

Corporations were rendered impersonal, and therefore distant, from local businesses. Large, distant companies subverted American values in order to profit off of illegal immigrants, while “even the most diligent” small businesses were the victims of “sophisticated forgeries” (para. 33). Once again, distant bureaucracies had made life difficult for locals, who “shouldn’t have to act like detectives” (para. 33) to determine if they were acting legally. Bush had expanded programs to help small businesses cut through the bureaucracy, casting the difference between his common sense and the bureaucracy of the status quo into stark relief.

The hero in the worksite enforcement scenario was Bush, as evidenced by his efforts to cut through bureaucracy and punish lawbreakers. Corporations had evaded immigration laws “across all of America” (para. 29) in the past, but Bush’s “sustained commitment” (para. 30) to border security increased funding for investigators, “and those good folks [were] working hard” (para. 30) to combat corporate malfeasance. Bush orchestrated a massive operation against businesses violating American laws, resulting “in the arrest of hundreds of illegal immigrants, criminal convictions against a dozen employers, and a multi-million dollar payment from one of America’s largest corporations” (para. 30). Bush’s strategy could “break the cycle” (para. 11) perpetuated by a faceless system.

Bush and those working on the ground were heroes. The villains of the scenario were representatives of a distant system, and illegal immigrants were caught up as pawns of something larger than themselves. Within that framework, Bush briefly touched on a variety of other scenarios that applied conflict to national struggles, each of which was based around distance. When he discussed interior repatriation, he explained that his plan sent immigrants “to their

homes, far from the border” (para. 11), demonstrating that he understood how distance could interfere with acting locally. Similarly, immigrants from Latin America were made more difficult to deal with because of distance. The solutions to all of these problems were local, and already put into action by Bush: he increased the number of beds in detention centers, which increased the amount of time security personnel had before they needed to release immigrants, and he was “cutting through the bureaucracy” (para. 16) Congress unwisely created, to process immigrants “through the system more quickly” (para. 15). By the time he discussed the upcoming policy debate, Bush had associated distance with his Congressional opposition through the villains in his stories.

**Eternal conflict.** While discussion of the relationship between crime and border security dominated the first two sections of the speech, the final major section turned its attention to the relationship between economics, American values, and a temporary worker program. The current immigration system forced Americans “to choose between a welcoming society and a lawful society,” while Bush’s plan offered “both at the same time” (para. 6). Other proposals maintained the “the old and tired choices of the immigration debate” (para. 40) between being “a compassionate nation that values the newcomer” (para. 5) and upholding the law. Any proposal that did not include compassion and uphold the law ought to be rejected, Bush argued, in favor of “a strategy to enforce our laws, secure our country, and uphold our deepest values” (para. 40).

The distinction Bush made between compassion and lawfulness was a simple division that explained competing policy proposals to his audience –the rule of law was shorthand for Republican-favored security proposals, while compassion and welcoming were shorthand for a Democrat-friendly temporary worker program. The rule of law was intimately tied to border

security and crime, while American compassion was tied to a temporary worker program that allowed immigrants a legal path to citizenship through gainful employment.

Having established himself as a heroic champion of the rule of law when discussing crime, Bush sought to demonstrate the uniqueness of his leadership in upholding compassion. Crime was an insufficient justification for compassion, and Bush did not try to create that association. Instead, the material concern from which he began his progressive form was tied to economics. Bush offered a proposal that “would create a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that Americans will not do” (para. 33). His statement assumed the need for immigrant labor could not be met under current laws, which was supported by his discussion of worksite enforcement. He also took for granted that the jobs being done by immigrants did not interfere with American workers, attempting to assuage his local audience’s concerns over competing with cheap workers. Bush had not had success with similar appeals in the past, having referenced the “jobs Americans won’t do” three times in a 2003 immigration speech, and in several previous State of the Union addresses, but he tried again while speaking more locally. He spoke of a clear economic benefit to locals, allowing them to profit off of immigrant labor without subverting American values.

America took “great pride in our immigrant heritage” (para. 7), because the nation was “strengthened by generations of immigrants who became Americans through patience and hard work and assimilation” (para. 42). Assimilation was important to Bush’s discussion, and he tied the idea into American history to demonstrate its importance. Immigrants could learn and display American values, by doing an honest day’s work and providing for a family (para. 6-7).

Labor was essential to Bush’s distinction between the rule of law and American compassion, especially when he discussed amnesty. As a term, amnesty is very loosely defined

and poorly understood, but for Bush the definition was clear and important. He defined amnesty as an automatic path to citizenship, and explained that his proposal “wouldn't provide for amnesty -- I oppose amnesty” (para. 36) because amnesty was an injustice that rewarded “those who have broken the law” and would make the border less secure by encouraging “others to break the law” (para. 36). Because conservatives opposed amnesty, he discussed it as a security concern. However, the compassionate perspective he offered allowed for a path to citizenship, because Bush supported “increasing the number of annual green cards that can lead to citizenship” (para. 37). For Bush, the important distinction was that citizenship was not granted automatically, it was earned through participation in the workforce, clearly explaining the connection between Democratic proposals and compassion, but disassociating those proposals from amnesty.

In the conflict among American values, immigrants who assimilated by earning wages and “learned our customs and values” (para. 41) were heroes, along with Bush, the Border Patrol, and the local communities. Those immigrants upheld the law and American values. Bureaucracy stood in the way, assigned the villainous role as it had been in previous associations. He said that local politicians could reform the system, noting “our Arizona Congressmen are building strong support for border enforcement among their colleagues” (para. 37), and he urged Congress to “rise to the occasion” (para. 39) by passing a good bill” (para. 37), based on comprehensive reform that would “add to this country's security, to our prosperity, and to justice” (para. 39). In fact, the Senate had already passed a bill that included a temporary worker program along with border security provisions, and Bush expressed confidence that the “people of Arizona will like” the final Senate version, because Senators McCain and Kyl were



“two good men taking the lead” (para. 38) and could be trusted to act with compassion while upholding the law.

Bush’s strategies were complex, using abstract concepts like space to organize associations among military and security issues. He wanted to create potential movement between multiple dimensions of understanding immigration, so that he could exploit the complexity of the issue at the same time he simplified it for his audience. He hoped to strengthen his security bona fides to garner support from the right, while maintaining enough subtle nods in the direction of the left that they would not abandon him. It was a well thought-out strategy but it did not work. In fact, it resulted in an incredible amount of backlash, as the right picked up on his subtle nods to the left, who simultaneously only responded to the security rhetoric intended for the right.

### **Response**

In Tucson, the shift in Bush’s rhetorical strategy from his earlier discussion of the issue marked the beginning of Bush’s push for CIR. Bush succeeded at effectively defining the the beginning of a new effort. This was the necessary first step to gaining attention and placing himself in the role of movement leader. Popular media accounts of the time, particularly among news outlets close to the border, picked up on the shift in Bush’s rhetoric and were quick to proclaim that “The Future of Immigration Reform” marked a new moment for Bush. The speech “launched a new push” (Quijano, 2005, para. 1) in which Bush was “reversing the priorities he had set out” (Lochhead, 2005, para. 1) in earlier speeches, including “his onetime campaign vow that ‘family values do not stop at the Rio Grande’” (Lochhead, 2005, para. 11). The few national media outlets that commented on the speech were equally effusive. Bush was acting “more rationally” (Economist, 2005, para. 16) than he had on the topic previously in hopes of pleasing

“as many grumblers as he can” (Economist, 2005, para. 12), while increasingly “talk[ing] tough about illegal immigrants” (Tobin & Medrano, 2005, para. 1).

The speech struck a balance between welcoming immigrants and threatening those who entered the country illegally, but the farthest-out wings of both parties seemed unhappy with the balance Bush struck. Ted Kennedy, who would eventually become Bush’s closest ally on immigration reform, called for Bush to “demonstrate leadership by saying no to his right-wing allies who want to close our borders” (Lochhead, 2005, para. 27).

On the other side of the political spectrum, Neal Boortz, a conservative talk radio host, jumped on Bush’s denial that his plan amounted to amnesty, proclaiming “now we’ve finally caught the president in a lie” (Economist, 2005, para. 18). Boortz and his colleagues represented a serious threat to Bush’s message, because right wing talk radio had sunk Bush’s previous efforts on immigration reform. As Linda Chavez, a former Bush nominee for labor secretary, noted on another occasion “There was such a backlash from social conservatives, the administration was not able to go anywhere with its guest worker program” (Lochhead, 2005, para. 18). Bush needed Boortz and other right-wing opinion leaders on his side early on during this push, or immigration reform was unlikely to move forward.

Online, the right wing was even more vehemently opposed to Bush’s new direction on immigration. On the popular conservative discussion board *The Free Republic*, commenters universally panned Bush’s speech, his policy proposal, and his credibility on immigration. In the thread dedicated to “The Future of Immigration Reform,” readers swapped pictures of Israel’s militarized fence, longing for immigrants to be treated similarly to Palestinians. “I’m tired of this invasion from Mexico” (Freerepublic.com, 2005, “dennisw”), one commenter explained, and Israel’s fence had been “designed to succeed!! [sic] Sensors, surveillance cameras, lots of barbed

wire, ditches to stop vehicles from ramming through it, paved access roads for fast armed response etc etc [sic]" (Freerepublic.com, 2005, "dennisw"). The most popular comment on the thread, dennisw's tirade represented a growing right-wing dissatisfaction with Bush. One typical comments was "GW has to put some skin in the game with some serious enforcement before I'll even consider his anti American amnesties...Shape up GW. We don't like your mealy mouth lip service to enforcement. We've [been] fooled too many times by lies... about enforcing our immigration and deportation laws" (freerepublic.com, 2005, "dennisw"). Commenter nicmarlo believed Bush's border security efforts were disingenuous, arguing "The weasal [sic] word is 'catch'. All a law enforcement officer has to do is drive out to the parking lot of most any home improvement store to 'catch' a whole bunch" (freerepublic.com, 2005). The thread went on to call Bush "impotus x-42," "El Presidente Bush," and recast the speech to the tune of a song from "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas."

It's possible that Bush saw the hyperbolic reaction of the far right as a victory. He may have been trying to craft support from the political center of America and distancing himself from the far right could help him differentiate his leadership on this issue from more conservative approaches. The right wing was unlikely to support his plan, so losing their support would not actually cost Bush much direct support. Bush may have seen it as a success, simply because it would be untenable to manage a movement that appealed to the far right while also attracting liberals, moderates, and Latinos, all of whom were more likely to support a plan that included guest worker provisions than one without them. As the far right vilified Bush, he hoped that the left would see a common enemy against whom they could ally themselves.

If this was his judgment, he underestimated the potential backlash. Many journalists following immigration reform at the time would later blame much of Bush's failure on talk radio

and conservative blogs (Smith, 2007; Fletcher and Fears, 2007), and Bush eventually conceded the difficulty right wing media caused him (Bush, 2010; Limbaugh, 2010c). Outraged by Bush's proposal on immigration reform, the next few months would see a prolonged campaign to smear Bush's reforms by labelling them as an amnesty for acknowledged criminals. Capitolwords.org tracks the use various words in Congressional speeches, and the popularity of amnesty skyrocketed immediately after the Tucson address. While the word had been used occasionally before, from as early as the Reagan administration, it had never seen such widespread usage. The term would remain popular for the rest of Bush's push, spiking after each of his subsequent addresses on the topic. The strategy was so successful that the use of the word spiked again, following a nearly identical pattern during Barack Obama's push for CIR.

Bush used the word amnesty in his speech only three times, each time in the context of vehemently opposing it. His limited use of the term may have been designed to force news coverage to show Bush denouncing it, and if so, it was successful. News coverage universally reported that Bush opposed amnesty and often quoted him saying so. Unfortunately for Bush, his limited use of the word encouraged reporters to ask other politicians about amnesty, and no shortage of Republican Congresspersons and political analysts argued that Bush supported amnesty, characterizing Bush's plan as weak and dishonest.

Still, conservatives typically were not "as xenophobic as their bumper stickers" (Economist, 2005, para. 23), and while the right-wing wanted Bush to focus exclusively on border security (Lochhead, 2005), the center of his party despised mass deportations and largely supported some version of a temporary worker program (Economist, 2005, para. 24).

Clearly, Bush's speech did not win immediate and overwhelming assent from moderates or pro-immigration Democrats, but it did activate anti-immigration Republicans, who now had a

clear target against which to campaign, particularly if they wanted to distance themselves from a President whose popularity was flagging. Tom Tancredo, a Republican Congressperson from Colorado who was an outspoken advocate of restrictive immigration efforts, was the most visible of those who furthered their political careers by running to the right on immigration. After the Tucson address, he warned the right that Republican politicians were “worried about whether or not you can really take to the bank” Bush’s dedication to border security (Quijano, 2005, para. 13). Leslie Sanchez, the former director of Hispanic communications for the Republican National Committee, argued Bush’s proposed solutions increased conservative confusion and uncertainty, because his proposals came with “a lot of things that look like immigrant-bashing” (Quijano, 2005, para. 15), which alienated moderate Republicans, Hispanics, and women, all of whom were key to a successful social movement.

Reactions to the speech away from the border echoed the tepid reaction of moderate conservatives, with potential followers confused about Bush’s message and potential opponents clear about where he stood. At the border, Bush’s security-focused opponents saw the speech as a call for amnesty, with national media regularly quoting Minutemen activists’ response to the speech in their reports (Economist, 2005; Fox News, 2005).

In Washington, big businesses pulled their support of Bush’s plan, a loss that was not offset by powerful immigration lobbies, making passage of a comprehensive bill more difficult (Lochhead, 2005; Edwards and Herder, 2012). As various proposals circulated in Congress, including House debates about the competing Senate bills co-sponsored by two of the figures on stage with Bush at Tucson, the debate moved away from Bush’s framework, prioritizing border security with little attention paid to guest workers or paths to citizenship.

By the end of the year, the House had passed H.R. 4437, “The border protection, anti-terrorism and illegal immigration control act of 2005,” which focused on preventing illegal immigrants from crossing the border and making obtaining gainful employment more difficult for illegals already living in the United States (AP, 2005a, para. 1-2). The bill was incredibly punitive, emphasizing increased punishments for illegal immigrants and those Americans who aided illegal immigrants, requiring the construction of 700 miles of border fencing, and formalizing Congressional oversight of border security. As part of negotiations, Congress agreed to put off discussion of the guest worker program until early 2006 (AP, 2005a, para. 3). At this point, it was clear that Bush’s effort was facing serious difficulties.

Between Bush’s Tucson address in November and the Spring Congressional session the following year, forces coalesced that radically altered the context of the debate Congress would undertake. The next chapter will look at those forces, including the rapid deployment of the term “amnesty” after Bush’s address, and the mobilization of two emerging counter-movements, one among conservatives and the other among Hispanics. Bush’s success in defining immigration reform in a way consistent with CIR helped encourage opposition on the right, but failed to earn support from the left.

In spite of Bush’s immediate failure, there is reason to believe that Bush’s local audience picked up on Bush’s definition of immigration reform, leading to more complex and compassionate explanations of illegal immigration than previously. Local newspapers and TV news spent the rest of 2005 doing in-depth long form journalism covering illegal immigration in Arizona communities, and *The Daily Star* slowly replaced omnipresent stories of criminal behavior among immigrants with complex discussion of competing political proposals. Readers responded, and *The Daily Star* felt compelled to collect and publish those opinions, which were

universally supportive of approaches that looked beyond crime. One reader begged for Americans “to discuss issues of importance in a fair, reasoned and civil way” (“Readers sound off,” 2006, Shultz). Another suggested reorienting the debate away from border security, because “we are not asking the right question. It shouldn't be ‘how do we stop all these illegal immigrants from crossing into our country?’ Maybe we need to ask, ‘why are so many Mexican citizens fleeing their country?’” (“Readers sound off,” 2006, Alvarez). For the border community, Bush had fostered rational middle ground. Elsewhere, he was less successful.

## **Chapter Four: A Rhetoric of Calm Among Cacophony**

After the careful choices that marked George W. Bush's rhetoric in the inception period, the unmitigated vitriol in conservative responses to the issue was loud and blunt. Conservatives screamed on talk radio, mobilized support from the pro-minutemen sections of their base, and generally ignored the content of Bush's appeals. Moderates saw the vitriol on one side, but no equal and opposite passion in Bush's rhetoric, which gave them little reason to ramp up their own participation. The left were largely ignored in Bush's early efforts on the assumption that their support would eventually materialize if they were given a choice between his approach and that of Congressional Republicans, but they failed to make a distinction between partisan demagoguery among opinion leaders on the right and Bush's conciliatory rhetoric, associating Bush with Colorado Republican Tom Tancredo, talk radio host Rush Limbaugh, and other prominent anti-immigration voices among the cacophony on the right.

Ignoring George W. Bush's call to "pass a good bill" (Bush, 2005, para. 38) that included provisions for a temporary worker program and a path to citizenship for illegal aliens, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437 on December 16, 2005. Also known as the "Border Control, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" or the "Sensenbrenner Bill" (Wasem, 2013, "Summary" para. 3), it offered border security provisions without addressing a temporary worker program or creating a path to citizenship for immigrants. The House agreed to discuss other provisions after the Senate offered their version of the bill, which was expected early the following year. At that point, Congress adjourned for their winter break. Whether either chamber actually intended to discuss the immigrant-friendly provisions when they returned, the political environment in early 2006 looked very different from the one they left, and both chambers put further immigration reform discussions on hold indefinitely.



The primary reason Congress avoided the topic was the emergence of a conservative counter-movement during that winter and spring. Supporters of the Sensenbrenner bill joined Rush Limbaugh's "crusade" (Resnick, 2013, para. 14) to bully any politician who stepped out of line on deportation-only immigration reform, even when listeners did not actually understand the bill (Noah, 2014). Talk radio typically dominated public political conversation among conservatives, so much so that Trent Lott complained "talk radio is running America" and that his phones were "jammed up for three weeks" (Weisman & Murray, 2007, para. 7) with callers directed to Congress by inflammatory, immigrant-bashing talk radio hosts, "no one more so than Rush Limbaugh" (Resnick, 2013, para. 14).

Even a moderate policymaker who felt free to ignore Limbaugh and his colleagues would have been unable to ignore the bricks in their offices. During the push for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), 12,000 bricks were delivered to Capitol Hill in support of a wall across the border between the U.S. and Mexico (Hulse, 2006), a visually striking and hard to ignore campaign, which was made all the more impressive by the additional security measures involving Congressional mail put in place after the 2001 anthrax attacks (Chaddock, 2006). The conservative counter-movement had powerful message distribution networks, organizational infrastructure, and deep pockets. Talk radio hosts would get listeners to "melt the Senate phone lines" (Lucas, 2013, para. 5) or fill their office with inconveniently cumbersome building materials, a threat about as subtle as the figurative brick through a Senator's window.

Tom Tancredo, who rose to national prominence during Bush's push for CIR, seized on the potential of mobilized anti-immigration supporters, utilizing right-wing rhetoric to connect immigration and terrorism, conflating American anxieties about the issues into a single anti-terror, anti-immigration narrative. Tancredo sought credibility as the political leader of an

emerging conservative counter-movement, so to win points with his base he repeatedly slammed Bush, labeling him as out-of-touch, pro-Democrat, pro-Mexican, anti-American, and anti-security. He would later use the attention he garnered as Bush's most vocal political opponent on the right as the basis for a 2008 presidential campaign, demonstrating the political potential on the right that could be available to leaders who effectively associated themselves with grassroots immigration movements.

At the same time, a primarily Latino pro-immigration grassroots counter-movement also saw Bush as an enemy and took to the streets in large numbers to demonstrate against the anti-immigration efforts in Washington. The demonstrations began in earnest during March, when thousands of protesters marched in Chicago (Avila & Olivo, 2006), followed by similar marches in large urban areas for the next several weeks, culminating on May 1<sup>st</sup>, with a series of rallies known alternately as the "Great American Boycott," "Dia Sin Imigrantes" ["Day Without Immigrants"] protests, or "May Day Protests," in which "more than a million demonstrators took to the streets" (Glaister & MacAskill, 2006) of more than 50 U.S. cities, chanting "Si, se puede" ["Yes, we can"] making the protests one of the largest in U.S. history.

Many members of Congress who had voted against the Sensenbrenner bill suffered the wrath of organized Conservatives and felt heat from groups back home as well (Turque & Stewart, 2006; Watanabe & Becerra, 2006). With so much opposition, it should come as no surprise that the Senate Judiciary Committee was in no rush to move the bill to the floor. Armed with a variety of procedural rules, they could forestall discussion of Arlen Specter's bill (Congress.gov, "S.2611") seemingly forever, avoiding the inevitable political backlash from choosing a side.

Seemingly alone amidst a cacophony of shouting voices, Bush renewed his efforts to generate support for CIR with a speech in Irvine, California on April 24, 2006. The speech was divided into three broad sections, with the first devoted to the ongoing conflict in Iraq and the War on Terror, the second covering immigration reform, and the third comprised of a question-and-answer session on general topics, most of which Bush tried to relate back to immigration reform. Like the Tucson address, Bush's speech in Irvine received limited national attention, but border community residents and other individuals interested in immigration reform from either end of the political spectrum paid close attention, as evidenced by the large amount of coverage by local news from around the border, conservative talk-radio, and online message boards catering to conservative and Latinos' political interests.

Following the speech, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to move the bill to floor debate, a surprise victory for Bush at a moment he desperately needed one. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, less than three weeks after the Irvine speech and the day the Senate began debate over their version of CIR, Bush delivered a nationally-televised White House address on Immigration reform, the first of its kind.

The May 15th address was the first time many Americans heard Bush speak at length about immigration. He wasn't giving an address in a border community for local audiences. This time he was in the White House, carried live during prime time by all of the major networks. To those new viewers, Bush offered a clear five-point outline of his CIR plan. He discussed border security, temporary work visas and the value of rational debate.

## **Purpose**

The purposes that must be achieved in the crisis stage of a social movement are less defined than the purposes of the inception stage, but the ultimate goal is to achieve the movement objective, in this case the passage of CIR. One particular problem common to the crisis stage is the difficulty movements have when competing with powerful counter-movements. When dealing with this problem, institutional movements generally have a choice between three options: oppose counter-movements, ignore them, or co-opt them.

For Bush, he had to oppose, ignore, or co-opt two different movements, one from the right and one from the left, which made his task more difficult. He could not use the same strategy on both counter-movements, because they were opposed to each other. If he attempted to co-opt one counter-movement, then it would serve as opposition to the other, further foreclosing his options, and if he chose to ignore both, he would remain in the middle, facing opposition on two fronts, making it difficult to generate support from the public. Bush had to choose how he would position himself relative to each movement, and to do so a primary purpose in the crisis stage was to encourage reasonable conversation and rational debate, moving conversation towards the rational middle ground.

Bush also had purposes from the inception stage that he had not fulfilled, a burden that he carried into the crisis stage. Most notably, he had failed to effectively distinguish his middle path from more extreme options in the eyes of his opposition, a problem exacerbated by his inability to establish himself as the credible leader of a movement that could effect change. For security hawks on the right, Bush was peddling amnesty, offering an automatic path to citizenship for lawbreakers that would only encourage more illegal immigration and undermine American laws. For immigration-friendly liberals, moderates, and Latinos, Bush was another

voice in the cacophony of nativist Republicans who wanted mass deportations and hid his sinister intentions behind the thin justification of security. If Bush wanted to effect change, he needed to build enough personal credibility with at least one of those blocs that he would be recognized as a leader deserving passionate support.

Finally, Bush needed to find a balanced approach that would appease Democrats enough to get the Senate bill to the floor for a vote, while also mollifying the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Bush's primary target was the right in the hope that they might be persuaded to work with Bush. In his mind, delivering the right to the negotiating table was the key to passing a bill.

While Bush wanted public support to pressure Congress, he also needed to stop the slide in his conservative approval in order to aid potential allies who were facing primary challengers from the right. Moderate Republicans often wanted to support the president on immigration reform ("Immigration Reform Proposals," 2006), but desperately needed political cover to do so (Swarns, 2006). Congressional districts that had been gerrymandered following the 2000 election (Greenhouse, 2005) left many Republicans more fearful of competition from the right in primaries than the left in general elections, which made it more difficult for some Republicans to support CIR. With Bush's approval ratings at their nadir among the Republicans in general and on the issue of immigration reform specifically, Bush could not offer his supporters political cover by lending them his name or by promising to campaign alongside embattled representatives in their home districts. In this difficult situation, Bush began his efforts to overcome difficult obstacles and pass CIR with a speech in Irvine.

### **Strategic Patterns in Bush's Irvine Address**

In the April 24<sup>th</sup> address in Irvine, George W. Bush used the same basic strategic pattern he had used in Tucson, creating a cognitive schema for his audience based on their previous knowledge and using it to explain immigration reform in relation to the war on terror. Bush continued to characterize the problems of illegal immigration as a violation of American values, with Democrat-friendly proposals tied to the compassion and Republican-friendly proposals tied to the rule of law.

Also similar to the Tucson address, Bush characterized himself as heroic, but in Irvine that heroism drew directly from his role as Commander-In-Chief. While the Tucson speech directly associated Bush with the Border Patrol, in the Irvine address Bush created a pair of associative triangles, first on a domestic level between himself, U.S. soldiers, and the Border Patrol, and second on an international level between himself, other world leaders, and the armed forces as an aspect of his agency.

While some strategic patterns in Irvine were similar to those of the inception stage, the speech reflected deeper changes in Bush's rhetorical strategy more than a simple evolution of his previous efforts. Locality and personal experience were no longer the primary way for audiences to understand the world, because the world Bush discussed was global, interconnected, and populated with powerful agents. Security was no longer primarily a matter of preventing crime, because the immigration section of the speech was overshadowed by the section on terrorism, a far greater security concern. While the Tucson speech spent only a few paragraphs explicitly praising immigrants for enacting American values, the bulk of the Irvine address' discussion of immigrants did so.

Generally, the new direction in Bush's rhetoric responded to the extreme nature of immigration rhetoric at the time. Discussing terror allowed him to demonstrate his strengths with conservatives, but he tempered that with more personal discussion of immigrants that showed his dedication to the provisions supported by the left. Bush's response to the partisanship on immigration reform was an attempt to build a pragmatic rhetoric of the middle ground, calling for rational argument in public discussion.

**Conflict scenarios.** When discussing terrorism throughout his presidency, Bush often described a world populated by agents of evil intent on doing harm to innocent people, generally falling into one of two perspectives. The first, which many critics argue prevents rational debate (Domke, 2004; Condit, 2010), was built around a Manichean frame in which heroic Americans opposed evil terrorists by any means necessary, allowing the president to label any opponents with whom he disagreed as evil and inhuman, thus rendering their ideas unworthy of consideration. In the Irvine address, Bush employed a less frequently used variant of his anti-terror rhetoric, in which a third party entered the scene. Terrorists hurt more than innocent Americans, also hurting Arab Muslims by perverting Islam, a move that recognized difference and encouraged compassion. "We face an enemy that had no regard for innocent life, an enemy which has hijacked a great religion to suit their political needs" (para. 8), Bush argued, maintaining the good vs. evil dynamic, but explicitly incorporating an extra party within his notion of moral correctness. Understanding the humanity of the third actor was "the first lesson of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001" (para. 8), suggesting that Bush wanted Americans to use that simple frame to understand conflicts, a schema he would return to as he discussed immigration.

Bush had tried a simple schema based around criminal conflict in Tucson, although some aspects were too subtle for many in his audience to accept. The schema based around terrorist

conflict had no such problems with subtlety. Bush placed terrorism at the forefront of problems facing the country, so the threat would not be overlooked, arguing “the confluence of a terrorist network with weapons of mass destruction is the biggest threat the United States of America faces” (para. 12). Rather than move through various levels of locality, removing blame by implicit dissociations between immigrants and coyotes, Bush directly related roles in the conflict surrounding illegal immigration to roles in the conflict surrounding the war on terror, a much simpler leap for his audience to make.

One area in which Bush was far too subtle in Tucson was when he attempted to separate immigrants from coyotes. His Irvine address focused on being direct and forthright about the difference between the two groups. As he turned to immigration, he made the distinction between illegal immigrants and coyotes much clearer than he did in Tucson by following the same model he used when discussing terror by explicitly separating the actions of immigrants from those of vicious human smugglers. In order to understand this shift, it is important to consider the strategies Bush employed in the section on terror. When he discussed terrorism and its victims, he did so by placing Iraqi desires within a universal framework based on God. “I believe there’s an Almighty,” Bush explained, “one of the great gifts of the Almighty is the desire in everybody’s soul...to be free. I believe liberty is universal. I believe people want to be free” (para. 17). Iraqis enjoyed the gifts of the Almighty as they enacted American values by voting (para. 18), praising American troops, and eschewing sectarian violence (para. 20). Immigrants were similarly enjoying the Lord’s providence by enacting American values within the framework of a higher power. America was “a nation of immigrants” with “a grand tradition...of welcoming people” because “immigration has helped reinvigorate the soul of America” (para. 26). Immigrants courageously sought a better life, often risking their lives to



escape their home countries (para. 34). Newly arrived people worked hard at jobs Americans would not do (para. 33, 34, 35), making Americans wealthier (para. 33), while feeding their families in the United States or back at home (para. 31). Immigrants' efforts in America made "America a better place" (para. 26), and did so without hurting Americans. These appeals ought to have been included in Tucson, but were overlooked in favor of subtler strategies, perhaps in the hopes of distancing himself from some of the pro-immigrant rhetoric of his first term.

The simplest marker of the three-party variant of Bush's perspective is that he explicitly used the term "coyotes" during the Irvine address for the first time in his push for immigration reform (para. 34). Bush defined coyotes as "smugglers" who were "preying on innocent life" (para. 34), making the distinction between human traffickers and immigrants plain. Americans, whether they were small business owners or Border Patrol agents, were constantly victimized by coyotes, who ran "an underground industry [that] thrives on human beings" (para. 35). Even when illegal immigrants appeared to be violating American values, Bush excused them, arguing that when individuals disappeared from catch-and-release programs, they failed to show up for their court dates because "they were coming to work, see. They wanted to put food on the table for their families, and they weren't interested in checking back in" (para. 30). Finally, Bush made the priorities of all freedom-loving people clear, insisting that Americans wanted the Border Patrol "chasing smugglers and dope runners" (para. 36), rather than breaking up hard-working families.

**Mollifying the right.** Throughout his presidency, Bush had been too moderate for conservatives' tastes on immigration. Unwilling to surrender the potential support of the right, which was crucial to getting any policy through Congress, Bush repeated many of his appeals to conservatives, while adding others. Again, he drew credibility on the issue from being a border

governor (para. 27) and from increasing funding, technology, and manpower on the border (para. 27). Bush also repeated his vow to end catch and release programs (Paras. 30, 31) and increase interior worksite enforcement (32-34), using many of the same statistics, citing the same programs, and employing the same types of appeals as he had earlier in his push for CIR.

Bush tried to distance himself from the amnesty label, refusing to use the word at all in the Irvine speech. If his articulation of the difference between coyotes and illegal immigrants was made more explicit in Irvine, then the absence of “amnesty” is doubly fascinating. In Tucson, his limited use of the word forced media outlets to only use the sound bite he wanted, but the very presence of the word granted those news reports the justification for covering amnesty, often by quoting other policy makers, taking control of the story away from Bush. This allowed Tom Tancredo and his ilk to define amnesty any way they wanted. In the Irvine address, the absence of the term may have been a plan to get news reports to avoid using the word entirely.

Bush also distanced himself from amnesty by more clearly articulating his proposal and by passing the details off to Congress, so he could stay on message as a security-focused leader who opposed amnesty. He offered no reservations when rejecting an automatic path to citizenship, calling the idea unfair to Americans, unfair to those who made the effort to enter the country legally, and a violation of the principle of law and order (para. 42). His proposal let immigrants demonstrate the worthiness of their claim to citizenship through working in the United States, demonstrating their economic value to the country, learning American customs, values, and the English language, and getting “in the back of the line” (para. 43), which he claimed upheld the rule of law. Outside of those general principles, on which all of the potential bills in Congress that included a temporary worker provision agreed, Bush elided specifics,

asking Congress to provide the details of a path to citizenship in terms of how long an individual needed to be in the country before they were earned citizenship and what nationalities were allowed in (para. 39, 43).

**Pragmatic rationality.** While Bush stressed his security bona fides with the right by reinforcing the security aspect of his proposal and couching immigration within the war on terror, he also distanced himself from the most punitive approach to immigration favored by Tancredo or Sensenbrenner, positioning his reform proposal as the only alternative to mass deportations. Massive deportations were “unrealistic,” and “just not going to work” (para. 39), and those that supported them were distracted by their emotions. In contrast to those on the right who were loud and emotional, Bush was able to rise above petty political squabbling. Bush had a plan that would “dismantle” this network of coyotes and provide cheap labor to American businesses, without the need for mass deportations, through “rational policy” (para. 38).

Throughout the speech, he followed that pattern, promising security the right could get behind, while calling for rational policy. When discussing the Border Patrol, for example, he told his audience “the best way to enforce our border ... is to come up with a rational plan that recognizes people coming here to work and let them do so on a temporary basis” (para. 35). When he discussed a temporary worker program, he argued for “a rational, temporary worker plan that says you don't need to sneak across the border... so you don't have to pay money to a coyote that stuffs you in the back of a truck” (para. 37). His calls for rationality therefore supported liberal proposals that allowed for immigrants to stay in the United States. Bush's rationality was based on recognizing immigrants' inherent humanity, which punitive proposals implicitly denied. Rational people, in Bush's view, wanted “our Border Patrol hunting gun smugglers and dope runners” (para. 37), because they understood the

difference between coyotes and immigrants. Rational Americans wanted “to treat people with respect” (Para, 38), and would oppose vicious, human-smuggling coyotes without breaking up honest, hard-working families.

For non-conservatives, Bush had to overcome the perception that he was part of the far right and equally responsible for the screaming matches that had dominated the national conversations for months. To do so, he associated himself loosely with the conservative establishment, before calling for change, a semi-apology that marked a new start, separated him from the perception that he was too conservative, and offered a form of enactment that conservatives could model. He argued that Americans had been failed by “those of us in positions of responsibility” (para. 38) and “those of us who have microphones” (para. 26), led astray from recognizing the humanity of immigrants by powerful opinion leaders in talk-radio and Washington. By associating himself with the old movement and calling for change, he could try to create separation from conservatives as he moved forward, as if his rhetoric had changed.

Bush criticized the emotional outbursts that characterized both sides of the debate, but only called for border security hawks side to debate more rationally. Bush assured his audience that he understood that immigration had been “an emotional debate” (para. 38), but insisted “one thing we cannot lose sight of is that we're talking about human beings, decent human beings that need to be treated with respect” (para. 38), an appeal that could only be aimed at conservatives who had been ignoring immigrants’ humanity. It would have been simple to call for orderly discussions and the rule of law, decrying the disruption Latino demonstrations had in major American cities, but the speech offered no evidence that he wanted pro-immigrant demonstrations to stop. Instead, he called for more Americans to join the “important debate” (para. 38).

Bush called on American values to prime his audience to think about immigrants through a welcoming frame. Discussion had to proceed “in a respectful way that recognizes we are a nation of immigrants” (para. 26), because America had always been a “nation of law, a welcoming nation, a nation that honors people's traditions no matter where they're from because we've got confidence in the capacity of our nation to make us all Americans, one nation under God” (para. 44). “Ours is a society”(para. 26), Bush reminded his audience, “that is able to take the newly arrived, and they become equally American” (para. 26). Immigrants who strived to be part of the country because they had a dream, and as long as they were “willing to work hard for that dream, it makes America a better place” (para. 26).

Even before discussing immigration, Bush primed his audience toward accepting immigrants as American by explaining that rational thought was the key to defeating terrorists, who hated America. Americans who wanted security both on the border and in Iraq needed “to be able to connect the concept of freedom to our security” (para. 22), and he explained the connection for them. Terrorists exploited American compassion and fear, through their “willingness and capacity to kill innocent people” (para. 13). American values were “the best way to defeat the enemy, the best way to defeat their ability to exploit hopelessness and despair” through the rational principle of “a chance to live in a free society” (para. 17).

Freedom was the uniting force binding disparate people together in God’s eyes, because the Almighty offered freedom (para. 12), and if his audience believed that “liberty exists in the soul of each person on the face of the Earth,” then it shouldn't surprise them “people will say, we want to be free” (para. 18). Bush used the connection between freedom and recognizing the humanity of others by bridging the terrorism section and the immigration section of his speech with a narrative of the connection between Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan and George H.W.

Bush, the President's father. "We talk about issues of peace," Bush said of his conversations with his Japanese counterpart, "I find it so interesting and so ironic that those are the conversations I have with him, especially since 60 years ago, my dad... fought the Japanese as an enemy" (para. 22). The two warring families were able to come together because "Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. Democracy can help change the world and lay the foundation for peace" (para. 23).

Bush called for calm, reasonable rhetoric and a rational middle ground in which to have a civil debate. Those calls were aimed to get the border security hawks within the President's party to compromise, and he coupled them with security rhetoric and references to Iraq that were designed to mollify those far right elements that had caused him so many problems. He used the God terms they held most dearly, including freedom, democracy, and the Almighty, proving he spoke their language and shared their values, but if this strategy was going to work, he also needed to deliver a consistent and concise message in the question-and-answer session, so that he could relate any concerns that remained with his audience to the ideological world he created in the body of his speech.

### **Questions and Answers**

Bush had worked hard to move his rhetoric to the right while also undercutting the rhetoric of those even farther to the right. Importantly, he had found a way to move that direction while maintaining the inherent value of immigrants. When he was forced off-script during the question and answer session, however, the middle ground he articulated was lost.

He took eight questions from the audience, four of which dealt with various aspects of immigration reform. In these answers, Bush accepted the premise of the questions that assumed

immigrants were dangerous and failed to articulate how his program would improve American life. His performance was far from clear, concise, and consistent.

The first question was about Bush's regrets while in office, and in an ironic twist he would later say was his biggest regret while in office was his failure to pass CIR. At the time, he made the case that he was right to go to war in Iraq and that the situation on the ground could not have been fully understood during invasion planning. As he described the chaos and loss of American life in the prolonged military effort in Iraq, he contradicted his earlier case that Iraq was a model of rationality, democracy, and freedom. Stammering through his explanation of the problems in Iraq, his response raised questions about whether his immigration plan would unfold any better than the invasion of Iraq.

If the question about his regrets was a hanging pitch, he failed to swing at all when a 14-year-old asked what the country would look like in the future. As he discussed an idyllic American future, Bush never mentioned the first generation of newly-minted Americans, the financial success of small-business owners who had hired temporary immigrant labor, or any issue of concern to immigrants or Latinos. By failing to pivot from the questions back to immigration, he missed opportunities to demonstrate that his plan could meet the needs of his audience.

Even worse were his answers to the questions directly concerning immigration. When a worried mother of an injured 12-year-old girl asked if immigrants were the reason emergency room care was slow, he interrupted her question in order to concede the point, as if immigrants so obviously prevented medical care for children that the question was an annoyance (Question 3, para. 2). When local policymakers insisted Bush's program had not made it to Orange County, Bush dismissed them and blamed the poor ER treatment the adolescent girl received on

her mother's ignorance, saying of the local health centers his bill provided "I'm surprised you don't have one here. I bet you do, and you just don't know it" (Question 3, para. 5).

He used a subsequent question as an opportunity to insist that a legal immigrant from Cuba would not be allowed to visit the country of his birth under a CIR program, then used another response to deny having known any immigrants growing up in Midland, Texas, an unbelievable claim that he would later dispute in his memoir. He missed multiple opportunities to make immigration more personal or praise new Americans, preferring technical discussion of Fidel Castro's currency policy and reminding his audience that previous members of his administration had been fired for hiring illegal workers.

The only time Bush managed to steer a question back to CIR without contradicting or subverting his speech was the final question, which asked the President what supporters of his specific version of CIR policy could do to make sure it became law. His response, "talking about it in a candid way" (Question 8, para. 14) did not involve calling individual representatives or joining demonstrations, but at least it didn't directly contradict his earlier statements. What followed, however, was a stammering, incoherent mess. He began by describing "The state of play right now" (Question 8, para. 15), as an environment in which "the Senate reached an important compromise" at the same time the Senate paradoxically "had a chance to get a bill, it just got caught up in, in my judgment, needless politics" (Question 8, para. 15). Politics was "one of the problems we face in Washington" because "we got people who aren't willing to -- they want to play -- they want to make the other person look bad, as opposed to make the country look good" (Question 8, para. 15). Bush's solution was asking "people, whether it be on Social Security reform, or immigration reform, to think about the country first, and put our political



parties aside” (Question 8, para. 15). Immigration was confusing to moderates, and Bush had failed to make it personal for his audience, even when given a perfect opportunity.

George W. Bush’s April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 address in Irvine further developed the rhetorical strategies from the inception stage, associating the conflict scenarios of his earlier rhetoric with the success conservatives perceived in Iraq. In a new direction for his rhetoric, he drew explicit distinctions between immigrants and coyotes and greatly increased the number and strength of his associations between immigrants and American values. He used a strategy of calling for rational debate to eliminate competing perspectives from the debate. Then, before he had even left the stage, he lost the thread of his thesis in the question and answer session, badly misfiring on some topics while completely ignoring the potential of others.

### **Reactions to the Irvine Address**

Media coverage of Bush’s Irvine address reflected the confusion and ambivalence of the speech itself. Terrorism and the war in Iraq dominated news coverage of the speech, particularly Bush’s question and answer response regarding his failure to plan well enough in Iraq (Brubaker, 2006) with far less coverage devoted to immigration. NBC (“Bush Diverting Oil Reserves,” 2006) pulled a quotation from the question and answer session in which Bush discussed energy independence, focusing their coverage of Bush’s immigration speech on gas prices. Others repeated his insistence that mass deportation was “unrealistic” (Loven, 2006), in conjunction with his support of community health centers, opting to cover Bush’s concession that immigrants take up hospital space but was unwilling to deport those who stood in the way of Americans receiving hospital treatment.

Still, some news coverage picked up on the humanitarian aspects of Bush’s message, as coverage of immigration protests increasingly discussed the personal stories of individual

immigrants along with quotes from the President about their humanity (Kalita, 2006; Archibold, 2006). Moreover, editorial content in major newspapers better reflected the distinctions between Bush's proposals and those of other Republicans, often associating Bush with Ted Kennedy, Arlen Specter, and Senate Democrats, instead of Tom Tancredo and Congressional Republicans. NPR ran a feature discussing the language of the immigration debate, in which Otto Santa Ana gushed about the President's immigration rhetoric, recounting the first time he heard Bush talk about immigration, when he "was so shocked I had to stop, get off the freeway, and listen to it...I was overwhelmed" (Schmitz, 2006, para. 25).

Support for immigration reform among average Americans remained largely unchanged (Segovia & Defever, 2010; Muste, 2013), but Americans were increasingly against mass deportations ("Immigration Bill Stalls in Senate," 2006), a sign that Bush was moving the conversation away from one fringe. Confusingly, 7 out of 10 Americans favored temporary worker status, while 8 out of 10 Americans in the same poll opposed amnesty (Blanton, 2006), in spite of the fact that security hawks often labeled a temporary worker program as amnesty. This disjunction reflected a baffled public and highlighted the work still to be done by the Bush administration. Support for Bush's immigration proposal also did not translate to support for his handling of immigration, which remained at a dismal 25%, slightly below his overall approval ratings of 31%, record lows for both (Nagourney & Thee, 2006; "Public disillusionment," 2006). If Bush's unpopularity had a silver lining, it was found in a Pew poll that showed that even Bush's atrocious approval rating was better than the average rating respondents gave for the Congressional representative from their home district ("Public Disillusionment," 2006).

One positive result for Bush was that Tom Tancredo did back off of his calls for mass deportations for the next few weeks (Loven, 2006, para. 5), possibly giving Bush's

Congressional allies a window in which to act. Outside Congress, the President had less success in bringing conservative opinion leaders into the rational middle ground. Rush Limbaugh continued to hammer the President's immigration plan, telling his radio audience the day after the Irvine address "the one place the president doesn't appear to be flexible at all is when it comes to immigration," before asking his listeners to redouble their efforts, because the Bush administration "don't hear you on immigration" (Limbaugh, 2006a, para. 10).

Shockingly, among the chaos and ambivalence of American reactions to Bush's rhetoric, the Senate Judiciary Committee surprised Beltway insiders by moving immigration reform out of committee for floor debates on the way to a possible vote. The Bush administration seized on this sudden success, and scheduled a prime time television address for May 15<sup>th</sup>, the first day of immigration debates in the Senate. Buoyed by an unexpected opportunity to move immigration reform forward and tempered by prior failures, Bush prepared to give a speech to garner support.

### **Strategic Patterns in Bush's Oval Office Address**

Bush's May 15th speech was the first time a president had focused an Oval Office address on illegal immigration and it would be the only Oval Office address during his tenure that did not deal with terrorism or the war in Iraq (AP, 2010; American Presidency Project, 2015; Calmes, 2013; Bush White House Archive). By giving an Oval Office address on immigration reform, Bush acknowledged that the stakes were incredibly high. However, the speech was much shorter than his other major immigration addresses, due to the constraints of network primetime. With an address half the length of "The Future of Immigration Reform" in Tucson, or the Irvine "Immigration Reform: Address in California," the strategic patterns Bush employed in the Oval Office were much simpler than elsewhere in his push for immigration reform.

As a result of the time constraints, Bush jettisoned the strategy of creating a cognitive schema he could mobilize across a variety of dimensions to make far-flung associations more concrete for his audience. To make his proposal as clear as possible, Bush laid out his speech around a detailed account of each point of his plan. The five points in his proposal comprise 15 of the 23 paragraphs in the text of the speech, with the remainder dedicated to outlining the problem to which his reform proposal responded, the actions he wanted each chamber of Congress to take, and how typical Americans could help. With a few very notable exceptions, little of the political substance had changed in the course of the previous 10 months; Bush still put border security first, represented by a combination of manpower and technology along the border coupled with better worksite enforcement infrastructure, and his security appeals represented the bulk of the speech (para. 6-15). He also argued for a temporary worker program (Para 16, 17) and better interior enforcement (para. 18), as he had in every speech. He explained how his temporary worker program was not amnesty (para. 19), and called on Americans to respect individual immigrants at the same time he called on immigrants to assimilate (para. 20), again similar to previous addresses on the topic.

**Security, security, security.** At the opening of the speech, Bush stated his purpose, which was to “make it clear where I stand, and where I want to lead the country on a vital issue” (para. 2), articulating that his purpose was clarity about his position and how that related to policy. What Bush made clear in this speech was that immigration was a matter of security, thereby jettisoning many of the rhetorical strategies of his previous efforts. As I note later, to make his commitment to border security clear, he promised a surge of 6,000 National Guard troops to the border. Bush was addressing the right as well as he could, hoping that by

mollifying security hawks with overwhelming military commitment, it would help a comprehensive bill pass the Senate.

In this effort, he explained that American values were best represented by a border that was “secure, orderly, and fair” (para. 5), three words that he had only associated with border security and his opposition to amnesty previously, and which he consistently referred to in terms of orderly placement in the green card line and fairness to those in the country legally.

Even the distinction between immigrants and coyotes, so carefully articulated in previous speeches, was sacrificed in the name of security. While the difference between coyotes and illegal immigrants was made implicitly in Tucson and those distinctions were drawn explicitly in Irvine, in the Oval Office address Bush described a border policy in which illegal immigrants were the same as coyotes and terrorists: “The border should be open to trade and lawful immigration – and shut to illegal immigrants, as well as criminals, drug dealers, and terrorists,” adding that doing so was “a basic responsibility of a sovereign nation” (para. 6).

In the Oval Office, Bush repeated his position that immigrants could enact American values by passing through the legal system his proposal set up. Immigrants would have to find a willing employer and would have to leave the country at the end of their visa or when the employer no longer needed their labor. While in his previous addresses, he used the inherent value of humanity or the providence of the Almighty to justify the presence of immigrants in his proposal, he now advocated a criminal background check as part of his visa program, forcing immigrants to provide evidence that they shared American values before they would be allowed to work or assimilate. As a country, Mexico was “our neighbor and our friend” (para. 12), but needed to cooperate with the United States “to improve security on both sides of the border, to confront common problems like drug trafficking and crime, and to reduce illegal immigration”

(para. 12). A temporary worker program was described as part of the homeland security apparatus because the primary purpose of work visas was easing the “enormous pressure on our border that walls and patrols alone will not stop. To secure the border effectively, we must reduce the numbers of people trying to sneak across” (para. 16). “Above all” (para. 18), the purpose of temporary work visas was to “add to our security by making certain we know who is in our country and why they are here” (para. 18).

For the right, Bush once again drew credibility from being a border-state governor, which granted Bush special knowledge into “how difficult it is to enforce the border, and how important” border security was to Americans (para. 7). He also drew credibility from the Border Patrol by laying out what he had given the agency. As the final connection between his commitment to border security and providing the Border Patrol with whatever they needed, he committed another 6,000 Border Patrol agents over the next 18 months, more than doubling the size of the Border Patrol since he took office, a significant increase in manpower. For the first time, he promised “high-tech fences in urban corridors” (para. 9), outfitted with an array of fancy electronics, because “America has the best technology in the world – and we will ensure that the Border Patrol has the technology they need to do their job and secure the border” (para. 9). Finally, Bush authorized 6,000 National Guard troops to be deployed to the southern border (para. 9).

It was an all-in strategy relative to his previous efforts. Bush scrapped the complicated schemas and scenarios from earlier speeches and moved much farther to the right, alienating his most vocal pro-immigration supporters. He had played his trump card, diverting military resources from the war on terror to control the border, and there was little else he could do to

mollify the right. Consequently, if he could not get conservative support after this speech, CIR policy might be dead in the water.

The speech also included appeals to moderates and an attempt to attract public support. To do so, Bush argued for rational policy and called on Americans to respect the humanity of illegal immigrants. Bush explained that the reason for his rare prime time appearance was “a matter of national importance” (para. 1), warning that “intense emotions” had taken control of the immigration debate. As important as security problems might be, Bush connected immigrants’ values and experiences to American ones, urging his audience to “remember that the vast majority of illegal immigrants are decent people that work hard, support their families, practice their faith, and lead responsible lives” (para. 4), rather than criminals.

While he discussed rationality in a similar fashion to his earlier speeches, the explicit inclusion of pro-immigrant forces in the irrational, overly emotional group was a new development. When Bush moved his remaining chips to the right side of the table by deploying the National Guard to the Rio Grande, he could no longer wait for a pro-immigration movement to change opinion. He argued that his approach was the only “rational middle ground” (para. 19) to deportations on the right or unchecked amnesty on the left, and that “wise and realistic” (para. 19) policy could “honor the great American tradition of the melting pot” (para. 20) at the same time it secured the border.

Having carved out what he hoped was an appealing middle ground, marked his position as the only rational plan that was free from blind emotion, and discounted the efforts of counter-movements on either side, he turned to lawmakers, looking to bring the movement to consummation. “I want to speak directly to members of the House and Senate” he told the American people, implying that average Americans should support an immigration reform bill

that is “comprehensive, because all of the elements of this problem must be addressed together or none of them will be solved at all” (para. 21). The House had a bill, and Bush told his audience that the Senate should have one by the end of the month so that he could sign the legislation into law. His message was clear: call your elected officials, get a rational debate going, and I will solve the problem.

In the crisis stage, Bush was forced to change his approach from the inception stage, making overt many of the arguments he had preferred to leave implicit previously. If he had hoped to sneak in pro-immigration messages without the right overreacting, he had failed, and as a result, his crisis stage rhetoric was forced to move to the right at the same time he more clearly articulated what he wanted for the left. His Irvine address was potentially confusing as he tried to walk the line between the extremes, even though his calls for rationality were designed to give him space in the middle. Unfortunately, whatever success he might have had at the time was undercut by his performance in the question and answer session, and when he addressed the nation from the Oval Office, he did so without a single successful address as a blueprint, which contributed to the constraints he felt as he spoke in a very limited time slot. By the end of the stage, his rhetoric was focused almost entirely on security and avoided rhetorical flourishes that might distract or confuse his audience.

### **Reactions to the Oval Office Address**

“The headline news” (Bumiller, 2006b, para. 1) that media picked up from Bush’s Oval Office address was the deployment of the National Guard to the southern border. At the same time, many news reports supplemented their coverage of military action with in-depth coverage of the liberal provisions in Bush’s policy, including temporary worker programs (“Bush Calls for Troops,” 2006; Bumiller, 2006b; Rutenberg, 2006). Finally, Bush had the public focused on the



need for rational discussion. Moving forward, he needed to maintain that attention and convert it into vocal support.

Liberals mocked the militarization of the border, reminding Bush “the immigrants now coming across the Mexican border do not want to sack our cities...they just want to mow our lawns and clean our offices” (Tierney, 2006, para. 19). Many on the left decried Bush’s domestic adventurism, comparing the unilateral deployment of “military boots in the desert sand” (“Border Illusions,” 2006, para. 2) on the Southwest border to boots in the Iraqi sand that had yet to return.

At the same time, angering the left with a symbolic gesture might have counted as a success, because “symbolism is what’s needed” (Tierney, 2006, para. 4) to provide “the cover needed by Republicans to vote for sensible reforms” (Tierney, 2006, para. 3). Deploying troops was “an effort to placate conservatives” (Bumiller, 2006b, para. 2), which largely succeeded at calming “conservatives who have demanded concrete steps to stem the flow of illegal workers across the border” (Rutenberg, 2006, para. 3).

Some pro-immigration reform voices remained supportive of Bush, even as his rhetoric swung wildly to the right. For long-time followers of Bush’s efforts, Bush’s troop deployment “reflected the approach of a man shaped by Texas border-state politics” (Busmiller, 2006b, para. 1) and “the real theme” of the speech was the need for Congress to “find a middle ground” (Bumiller, 2006b, para. 3).

Bush’s appeals for calm were mixed with calls for increased militarization of the border, and he followed the speech with an aggressive and comprehensive media blitz (Hulse & Rutenberg, 2006) to bolster both sets of appeals. For the security hawks, he made a surprise call for increased border fencing while riding in a Border Patrol dune buggy (Bumiller, 2006c),

drafted a public letter to Congress requesting 6,000 National Guard troops to reinforce the border, and made minor speeches and staged appearances throughout the west and midwest that focused on security (Stolberg, 2006a). In support of rational conversation, he enlisted Vice-President Dick Cheney to defend Bush's policy on Rush Limbaugh's syndicated radio program (Limbaugh, 2006) and appeared in live interviews on each of the major networks, preaching calm in each appearance.

In the Oval Office address, Bush urged immediate action, and the subsequent media blitz demonstrated the urgency he wanted from Congress. He hoped that his energy and urgency could translate into leadership, which resonated with Senate Democrats. Arlen Specter, the author of the Senate Bill, asked him to get involved in "the nuts and bolts" (Stolberg, 2006b, para. 13) of Congressional negotiations, publically endorsing the President's leadership on the issue.

In the Oval Office address, Bush made his strongest case in support of CIR, especially for conservative security-hawks. However, the response was not universally positive, particularly on the right. House Republicans, the single most important audience for Bush to persuade, refused to budge, particularly Tom Tancredo, who refused to accept that deploying the National Guard was a concession, saying of the president's negotiations "I don't think there's a thing he can say" (Bumiller, 2006c, para. 17) to satisfy anti-immigration conservatives. Representative Steve Pearce explained the mood of border-state Republicans, telling reporters "I'm not going to vote for the bill as it currently stands. Out here, we have a saying: 'trust your neighbor but brand your cattle'" (Bumiller, 2006c, para. 16). Without those Congressional Republicans on board, Bush was out on a very dangerous limb. If the House could convince their Senate counterparts that compromise would never occur, many conservative lawmakers would not risk supporting a bill that would be used against them in the next election. Still, Bush had aggressively moved

from faulty strategies in the inception stage through a crisis period marked by two counter-movements towards consummation in a matter of weeks. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Senate passed comprehensive legislation, and all that remained to be seen was whether Bush had the political clout to guide negotiations between the two chambers. He had already conceded ground on militarization of the border and border fencing, but House Republicans remained obstinate.

A few weeks later, Bush attacked Congressional Republicans who wanted to wait until after the midterm elections to move forward on immigration reform (Stolberg, 2006a), trying unsuccessfully to hold his opposition accountable for their reluctance to act. However, the Senate postponed a vote to send immigration reform to conference, at which point Bush had to rely on the support he had generated among the American public to punish anti-immigration Republicans at the polls. With little else to offer his opposition, Bush needed the American people to pressure the Senate to vote to enter conference with the House and further pressure the conference committee to enact Bush's proposal. This effort will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **Conclusion**

With each step Bush took towards the right, the right took a step back. If he offered drones, Tancredo asked him for military support. When he gave military support, Sensenbrenner wanted more border fencing. When he agreed to negotiate on border fencing, Republicans simply rejected compromise out of hand, taking none of Bush's offers seriously. As an example, Tom Delay gave an interview in 2005 in which he outlined the concessions he would need before he would vote for a temporary worker program. He considered the Predator drone the most important tool for securing the border, and wanted Predators to supplement border fencing. As he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "we can set up our systems with Predators and everything," an unrealistic policy demand. "Ultimately, we need to enforce our laws" he continued, "And then,

they'll be willing to talk about a guest-worker program" ("Interview with Tom Delay," 2005). By 2006, Bush had offered a great number of concessions to the right, including the seeing eye wall comprised of Predators that held primary importance for DeLay and a variety of programs to enforce the laws on the books, including a massive increase in resources for the Border Patrol, a workplace verification system to enforce laws on the interior, requiring guest workers to return home before they could apply for citizenship, ending family tie visas, and requiring illegal immigrants currently living in the nation to get in the back of the citizenship line. One by one, Bush either added concessions to his proposal or unilaterally made them happen, like deploying the National Guard to the Rio Grande. Still, it was not enough for Republicans to budge on the temporary worker program.

Bush's strategies of mollifying the right with tough language and actions while ironically bemoaning emotional reactions had potential to produce action. Moreover, the right gave no indication that they were satisfied with Bush's efforts. Rush Limbaugh demonstrated the lengths to which the right-wing was willing to go in order to avoid any compromise. Any concession from the president, he warned his audience, demonstrated "a vacuum of moral authority visited on the present by the shames of the past" (Limbaugh, 2006a, Para. 15), which proved that Bush was no more than a race traitor, victimized by "those elements of non-white humanity" (Limbaugh, 2006b, Para. 14) who targeted powerful white men, even as they were "slimed as bigots" (Limbaugh, 2006b, para. 15). Bush was getting nowhere with lawmakers, and on the radio compromise was treated as a sign of weakness.

After his Tucson address, the national audience was not engaged, and the anti-immigrant leaders moved to the right, taking some conservatives with them. After Irvine, the far right refused any compromise. After the Oval Office address, polls from Gallup and Pew showed the

public supported Bush, but the far right remained unmoved. His rhetoric was working with everyone except his most important audience, who had been inculcated by the hyper-partisan world that Bush helped create. This meant that there was no longer a reasoned middle ground upon which a compromise that was a good deal could be achieved.

## Chapter Five: A Rhetoric of Moderate Middle Ground

After spending late spring 2006 in a campaign to develop public support for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), George W. Bush moved away from the topic as the midterms approached. He had not generated a public mandate for the issue on which policymakers wanted to campaign and few in Congress were interested in campaigning with him while his personal popularity was at its nadir (Balz, 2006a; Abramowitz, 2006; Conroy, 2006). With the president sidelined, the elections became a trial in absentia for the Bush administration (Langer, 2006; Linden, 2006) and a referendum on the future of the Republican party (Balz, 2006b).

Democrats dominated the 2006 election, taking control of both chambers of Congress (CNN Elections, 2006). All told, the GOP lost 30 seats in the House of Representatives, and became the minority party in that chamber for the first time since the “Contract with America” in 1994 (Hawley, 2013). Without a compromise on immigration in place, news reports were quick to blame the loss on Republicans’ anti-immigration stance. Latinos overwhelmingly supported Democrats, “taking back a significant portion of the support they had granted the Republicans just two years earlier” (“Latinos and the 2006 midterm election,” 2006, Para. 1). As Latinos veered left, they favored pro-immigration conservatives as rarely as they did the less-friendly security hawks in the GOP (Hawley, 2013), punishing the moderate Republicans who remained with Bush on CIR.

However, while Latinos turned against Republicans, few individual Republicans were hurt by the Latino exodus. Among the 75 closest House races, only one took place in a district where Latinos represented at least 20% of registered voters, and none of the Senate races in

which a Democrat defeated a Republican incumbent occurred in a heavily-Latino state (Hawley, 2013). While the party as a whole lost 30 seats, Latinos exceeded 10% of registered voters in only four of those districts (“Latinos and the 2006 midterm election,” 2006, Para. 1).

In fact, many of the most vocal anti-immigrant Republicans were buoyed by their right-wing stance on the topic. For example, Tom Tancredo maintained virtually the same support in the 2006 election as he enjoyed in the previous two, in spite of Colorado voters following the country’s overall move to the left (CNN Elections, 2002; 2004; 2006). Thus, failing to act on immigration clearly hurt the party in national polling, but it had little effect on anti-immigration reform Republicans in Congress, largely because their districts had been drawn to minimize the effects of Latino voting blocs. Paradoxically, backlash against immigration reform may have strengthened the hand of the far-right at the same time it weakened the party overall.

This result had been forecast in late 2006, after Bush’s “Future of Immigration Reform” address in Tucson, when then House majority leader Tom Delay held a series of close-door meetings with anti-immigration Republicans from both chambers of Congress. The group was debating whether immigration reform was more beneficial for upcoming election campaigns as a legislative victory, albeit one based on compromise, or as an issue that was still up for debate (Morris, 2006). As a result of those meetings, the June special election in California’s 50th Congressional district was used as the test case for anti-immigration campaigning (Ayon, 2006). The southern California seat had been vacated by Duke Cunningham, “the most corrupt member of Congress ever if measured by the amount of bribes he admitted accepting” (Condon, 2014), and Republicans were unlikely to keep it due to plummeting Republican popularity and the scandal under which Cunningham left office (Perry, 2006). When Republican Brian Bilbray rode anti-immigrant rhetoric to a surprise victory, the party leadership was

ecstatic. Congressional Republicans had found an issue to drive their base to the polls, separate themselves from an unpopular president, and protect themselves from challenges on the right, all without conceding policy ground to the left. “All of a sudden,” remembered Republican Congressperson Jeff Flake, “Bilbray becomes our model” (Morris, 2006, Para. 23), a distressing development for long-time CIR advocates like Flake.

Democrats enjoyed a majority in both chambers, but many potential supporters from both parties were skittish about immigration reform. Democrats were anxious to begin the lame-duck phase of the Bush era, and preferred to pass CIR with a Democrat in the White House (Weisman & VandeHei, 2006; Baker & Fletcher, 2006). Some Democrats were also concerned about how a guest worker program might affect organized labor, a topic about which the AFL-CIO reminded the Democrat beneficiaries of their campaign largesse. The combination of fervent conservative opposition to immigration reform and a weakening party brand put Bush in a very difficult spot and across the aisle his bipartisan support was looking shaky.

### **Barriers and Goals**

Bush knew that time was short to accomplish comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), because by early 2007 the nation would be consumed by the presidential election. He had already lost time due to the midterms, and in the lead up to those elections he had been reluctant to publically attack fellow Republicans for deserting him on CIR as they faced significant electoral challenges in many districts. He needed to act fast or risk losing the attention of the American people and the ability to punish the opposition within his own party.

With Republicans opting for the Bilbray strategy over Rove’s “durable Republican majority,” Bush needed to build a bipartisan coalition to get CIR out of the Senate and into a conference committee that could accept CIR. That meant he needed to convince moderate



Republicans of the importance of CIR while providing them with cover from attacks on the far right. He also needed to maintain support from Democrats who had become skeptical about Bush's commitment to the immigration-friendly aspects of CIR, particularly in the context of his party's electoral defeat and the security-first rhetoric he employed throughout 2006.

### **Strategic Patterns During the Consummation Stage**

To accomplish his goals, Bush created a rhetoric that combined elements of his earlier calls for rationality with vivid military imagery. In the rhetoric of the consummation stage, he argued that his plan was the only one that could pass through Congress and that the Border Patrol could only secure the border with aid from his provisions, putting pragmatism ahead of personal convictions. Unlike much of his earlier rhetoric, he minimized the importance of the humanity of immigrants or calls to uphold American values.

He cited the results of his border enforcement efforts, particularly "Operation Jumpstart," in which he deployed 6,000 National Guard troops to the border to train and support Border Patrol agents, using visual cues to associate himself with the militarization of the southern border. He attacked his extremist opponents, painting them as unrealistic and out of the mainstream of public opinion. Bush hoped to position CIR as the only viable alternative to mass deportations, which might prove as effective at associating his opponents with a fringe strategy as they had been when associating his proposal with amnesty. He defended his proposal as a reasonable alternative to the excesses of both sides, and a superior alternative to the status quo. In doing so, he argued that supporting deportation was actually support for hysteria, nativism, and the de facto amnesty of the unenforceable current system.

Bush pushed his rhetoric of the moderate middle ground in major speeches in Arizona, Georgia, and at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. ahead of floor

debates scheduled for late June, frantically seeking the support that had eluded him on immigration since 2005. The speeches were very similar in their content, focusing on security and rationality. In each address he appeared as often as possible with military and police personnel, who also comprised the direct audience. The speeches were much shorter than those he gave earlier in his push for CIR, but came more quickly as he had fewer issues to push that might have taken his attention as the deadline for the bill drew nearer.

**Promises made, promises kept.** As George W. Bush began the final push for CIR, he returned to where his push started. Between the middle of 2006 and the middle of 2007, Bush spoke in Arizona three times, and when he was not physically in Arizona, he made constant reference to the primary themes of his 2005 Tucson address, particularly the connection between the Commander-In-Chief and border security personnel, referencing the promises he made in his initial visit to the border, and tying in local issues to humanity and rational debate. Just as he spoke to the Border Patrol in 2005, his 2007 addresses were presented to military and law enforcement personnel, allowing him to discuss keeping his promises directly to those tasked with combating illegal immigration on an everyday basis.

In the 2005 Tucson address, Bush spoke in front of two Border Patrol helicopters (Draper, 2005), but such spectacle was rare in the early stages of immigration reform. By the 2006-2007 publicity push, Bush was heavily emphasizing military imagery, with official White House photos showing him walking the border with the Border Patrol and National Guard, riding in Border Patrol dune buggies, and delivering his speech in rolled-up shirt sleeves, without a tie, in front of the Border Patrol seal (Draper, 2006a; 2006b).

In the official White House photos of his April, 2007 speech, “More on Immigration: Address to the Arizona Border Patrol” (Bush, 2007a), Bush looked even more like a G.I. Joe

action figure than he had in previous visits, posing with Predator Drones and Humvees (Draper, 2007a; 2007b), joking around with the collected Border Patrol agents (Draper, 2007c), briefing fully-armored National Guard soldiers, and delivering his speech on an outdoor stage that he shared with bleachers full of uniformed Border Patrol agents, all surrounded by a chain link fence, as if he were directly abutting the border (Draper, 2007d).

Bush's shirt-sleeves were again rolled up his arms to indicate that he had been working outside in the desert heat. "I went to a neighborhood that abuts the border," he reminded his audience, "It's the place where a lot of people come charging across" (2007a, Para. 7). Bush was dressed as the Commander-in-Chief, tying his clothing to his credibility, and his language helped to connect his military role with the military visuals. "I am proud to be the Commander-in-Chief of all these units here today," (2007a, Para. 14), he explained, continuing the strategy of associating himself with the Border Patrol that he began in 2005. While the strategy had not worked previously, the images in Arizona now included fully armored troops, all of whom had been sent to the border by Bush, a clear indication of his security focus.

As he dressed the part of military commander, he used his language to integrate the visual cues into the text of his addresses. Bush was particularly preoccupied with the clothes being worn by the Border Patrol, the National Guard, and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement officers. First, he related their uniforms to their work, telling them "I want to thank you all for wearing the uniform and doing the tough work necessary, the work that the American people expect you to do" (2007a, Para. 4). He then continued thanking the crowd based on clothing, explaining that he was grateful for "the National Guard folks for wearing the uniform" (2007a, Para. 13), and even the families of Border Patrol agents, who understood the value of clothing, "I want to thank their families for standing by the men and women who wear the uniform during

this particular mission” (2007a, Para. 26). The families made sacrifices for the men and women in uniform and he implored his audience to email his gratitude back home, a reminder that the National Guard was a military organization and his Border Patrol efforts sent troops into harms way.

In Georgia, Bush used uniforms to represent anticipation, because trainee Border Patrol cadets were “getting ready to come and wear the green of the Border Patrol” (2007b, Para. 22). In a rare mention of Immigration and Customs officers, who were identified separately from the larger Border Patrol apparatus in only one paragraph over the two years he talked about immigration reform, Bush identified them through their apparel as well. “I see a lot of ICE hats” (2007b, Para. 24), Bush excitedly told his audience.

Uniforms also represented privileged knowledge that civilians did not understand, “Men and women who wear the uniform understand what's going on” (2007b, Para. 18). His focus on clothing and appearances highlighted the key distinctions between Bush and his opponents, which included that he had come to the border and that he provided the troops deployed to the Rio Grande, while other policymakers remained on Capitol Hill, far away from the critical mission. Bush implored lawmakers to “give us a chance to make it easier for the folks who wear the uniform along our borders to do their job” (2007b, Para. 35), offering them the opportunity to “show leadership and solve this problem once and for all, so the people who wear the uniform in this crowd can do the job we expect them to do” (2007b, Para. 57).

Visually, the National Guard stood out from the Border Patrol in every image. Border Patrol agents looked like law enforcement personnel, wearing uniforms that resembled police officers, albeit in a green palette instead of blue. National Guard troops could not look less like typical police officers, wearing fatigues, bulletproof vests, and carrying assault rifles. Each time

he reminded his audience that he had been the one “to deploy 6,000 National Guard members to provide the Border Patrol with immediate reinforcements” (2007a, Para. 25), he reminded them of the overwhelming military might he brought to border security and when he referenced uniforms, he drew the listeners’ focus back to that clear distinction. He further supported his military association with language like “deploy”(2007a, Para. 25), “deter” (Para. 27; Para. 30), and “threat” (2007b, Para. 40) when discussing illegal immigration. He referred to his recent efforts as “Operation Jump Start," invoking the military title for the deployment of National Guard members to the border.

Having established his connection with the gathered security personnel through visual associations, Bush explained how the overwhelming and obviously visible military presence represented the first of many promises Bush had kept on immigration reform. He began the Yuma address by reminding his audience of his frequent visits to Arizona, during which he had “gotten to know the Border Patrol” (2007a, Para. 4), before outlining the promises he had made to “the people serving in this fine agency” (2007a, Para. 4). He then explained that his return was part of a concerted effort “to check on the progress, to make sure that the check wasn't in the mail -- it, in fact, had been delivered” (2007a, Para. 5). He demonstrated that he had kept the promise to “give you the manpower and resources you need to do your job” (Para. 5), which meant that he could be trusted on border security.

Much of Bush’s discussion of border security listed the problems the agency faced when he visited before and how his efforts had rectified the problem. In Yuma, he reminded his audience that when he last visited, “we were understaffed here. We weren’t using enough technology to enable those who work here to do the job the American people expect” (2007a, Para. 5). Thanks to the Bush administration, things were much different, he argued, explaining

that his administration “doubled the funding for border security since I’ve been the President” (2007a, Para. 20). His efforts were bearing fruit already, because “the funding is increasing manpower” (2007a, Para. 20), which was a key step towards the ultimate goal of doubling “the size of the Border Patrol” (2007a, Para. 22), and the success of his plan was exemplified by the number of border arrests dropping from “an average of more than 400 people a day...to fewer than 140 a day” (2007a, Para. 27).

In each of his speeches in the consummation stage, Bush used virtually identical claims to make the same basic arguments. He repeated the argument that border security funding had doubled during his tenure, that he eventually wanted to double the personnel for the Border Patrol, and that his efforts were already showing results, which was proven by the shrinking number of arrests. In Glynco, he explained “We’ve doubled the funding for border security since I took office” (2007b, Para. 15), which meant that “the more manpower is on the border, the more likely it is we’ll be able to enforce the border” (2007b, Para. 16), echoing the Yuma address. He invited his Glynco audience to judge for themselves, because they could “tell when the border is better defended because the number of arrests go down... arrests have gone down by 27 percent over the past year on the southern border” (2007b, Para. 19). Again in Washington he reported that “we’re going to double” the number of Border Patrol agents, again maintaining a narrow focus and language consistency to force discussion onto very narrow ground.

Bush also repeated his claims that increased funding resulted in more effective infrastructure and he was most fond of referencing Predator drones and border fencing, one a high-tech cutting edge solution that demonstrated the military might Bush had authorized, the other a low-tech solution favored most vocally by the far-right. Both reinforced Bush’s security credentials. Predator drones were, he argued, “the most sophisticated technology we have,”

(2007a, Para. 23). Newly installed border fencing and road infrastructure also were “really important to basically leverage the manpower” (2007a, Para. 23) of Border Patrol agents. Perhaps no piece of military technology looked more alien and futuristic in 2007 than the Predator and its use on the border represented clear evidence of the technology and resources he delivered to the border and by extension his commitment to border security.

**Pragmatism.** If his audience was having trouble deciding between deportation and comprehensive reforms, Bush used the various military and security personnel in his direct audience as evidence of the correctness of his plan. Their attendance at each speech was also a form of assent to support CIR, and when he addressed them specifically they acted as a proxy for the audience so he could develop support from the associations he had drawn between himself and the security agencies throughout his speeches. His main case was that deportation-only plans, like the ones he attributed to the right, were impractical and would unduly burden security efforts on the ground.

In his 2007 addresses, Bush applied a pragmatic lens to amnesty as well, arguing “People say, why not have amnesty? Well, the reason why is because 10 years from now you don't want to have a President having to address the next 11 million people who might be here illegally” (2007a, Para. 39). After giving that practical argument, he then listed his secondary concern, which had at one point been the primary reason for immigration reform: “we're a nation of law, and we expect people to uphold the law” (2007a, Para. 39). Bush had clearly put pragmatism ahead of ideology and throughout the speech he made sure to place pragmatic and material concerns ahead of ideological ones.

Unlike the impractical deportation-only schemes, a CIR effort was “necessary so that the Border Patrol agents down here can do their job more effectively” (2007a, Para. 8). He told the

collected security personnel that the “good bill” around which “people generally want to come together” to pass would “make your job a lot easier” (2007a, Para. 45), but it was endangered by distant Congressional ideologues. Anyone who wanted to know the truth could ask the “older hands” among the Border Patrol who would “tell some of the younger folks that things have changed significantly” (2007a, Para. 15) under the Bush administration. Unlike civilians in Congress and on the radio, “Men and women who wear the uniform understand what's going on. There's a focused, concerted effort to enforce our border” (2007b, Para. 45). Congress did not share Bush’s connection to the military, so while the far right would casually claim “they’re not doing anything to secure the border,” (2007b, Para. 45) those claims simply proved their ignorance.

Mass deportation should be rejected on pragmatic grounds because, according to Bush, “it's just an impractical position; it's not going to work. It may sound good. It may make nice sound bite news. It won't happen” (2007a, Para. 41). Continuing the pattern from his Oval Office address, Bush attacked deportation not as much on moral grounds, but because the idea was “unreasonable” (2007a, Para. 47). If mass deportation were to pass into law, the Border Patrol would have to chase down every illegal immigrant, instead of focusing on dangerous criminals, while CIR would “allow federal agents to focus on apprehending violent criminals and terrorists who are a threat to our country rather than people who want to work here” (2007b, Para. 44). The split was clear and Bush repeated the juxtaposition of family-loving immigrants and terrorists in several of his speeches. For example, in Yuma he argued CIR would result in “Border Patrol agents chasing down terrorists and gun runners and dope runners as opposed to people who are coming to do jobs Americans aren't doing” (2007a, Para. 45).



Even if his audience believed in deportation, it was not politically feasible, thus necessitating compromise. No bill could garner mainstream support if it promised to “rout people out of our society and ‘send them home.’ It's just not going to happen. And so good people have come together and derived a solution based upon compromises that addresses this problem” (2007b, Para. 13), a sentiment that was clearer than Bush’s syntax. Bush recognized the difficulty of negotiating with his opposition, but the difficulty of drafting a bill that could secure the border and pass both houses meant that he needed “to work with the Republicans and Democrats to get the job done” (2007c, Para. 3). Bush characterized those negotiations as avoiding the extremes of amnesty and deportation, lending a sense of urgency to his bipartisan efforts for the majority of Americans, who preferred neither wholesale deportation nor wholesale amnesty. He said of the negotiations that he was “working closely with Republicans and Democrats to find a practical answer that lies between granting automatic citizenship to every illegal immigrant and deporting every illegal immigrant” (2007a, Para. 40).

**Bush punches back.** Leading up to the midterm election, Bush had been unwilling to publically attack the far-right border security-hawks in his own party. When he discussed the overwhelming vitriol of the public debate, he argued that neither side was acting reasonably, and that he alone represented the middle ground. At the same time, those who were familiar with immigration reform efforts could see that Bush was targeting the right, even if that subtlety was lost on typical Americans.

After the election, Bush employed a more aggressive strategy toward the right. He claimed that they were motivated by prejudice and attacked their naïve belief that “the best way to deal with 11 million to 12 million people is to get them to leave the country” (Bush, 2007b, Para. 12). He argued the major issue preventing “Republicans and Democrats [from coming]

together to resolve outstanding issues” (2007a, Para. 8) on immigration reform was the far-right’s “name-calling and finger-pointing” (2007c, Para. 19), which was no more than “empty political rhetoric” (2007b, Para. 49) by those who lacked the “courage to go back to their districts and explain exactly what this bill is all about” (2007b, Para. 49). “It’s an emotional issue,” Bush explained, once again condemning those who gave into their emotions. Rather, he argued for calm and rational analysis, observing “people have got deep convictions. And my hope is that we can have a serious and civil and conclusive debate. And so we’ll continue to work with members of both political parties” (2007a, Para. 40).

That debate had not occurred because of the vitriol on the right, according to the President. Security-hawks were motivated by prejudice, and were “trying to frighten our fellow citizens” (Para. 49) with amnesty. “If you want to scare the American people, what you say is, the bill is an amnesty bill” (2007b, Para. 49). Conservatives were using the term amnesty and the idea of deportation to “inflame passion” (2007b, Para. 12), even though doing so was actively manipulating the American people. “If you want to kill a bill, then you just go around America saying, this is amnesty. In other words, there are some words that elicit strong reactions from our fellow citizens,” he added, “those who call it amnesty, they’re just trying to, in my judgment, frighten people about the bill” (2007c, Para. 12).

Bush offered his audience an alternative to the nativist fears and manipulative tactics of the right in his 2007 addresses. “America must not fear diversity,” Bush implored (2007c, Para. 17), “we ought to welcome diversity. We ought to have confidence in what we have done in the past, and not lose confidence about what we will do in the future” (2007c, Para. 17). What made America great, in Bush’s view, was that “we welcome people like that in a legal way; that

throughout our history there have been the stories of people who have enriched our soul and lifted our spirit by coming to America” (2007c, Para. 15).

**The middle ground.** A final aspect of Bush’s rhetoric of militant moderation combined themes of pragmatism with redefinition, explaining that the failings of the current system were a de facto amnesty, making inaction the worst possible option. To make this case, Bush combined some of his earlier strategies for defending rationality with an increased emphasis on urgency and efficacy. Earlier speeches had used immigrants’ inherent humanity to justify CIR, and decried the emotional outbursts occurring in public debates, strategies he continued to use in 2007. While Americans had “deep convictions” on “an emotional issue,” Bush urged them to trust the political process as he worked “with both political parties” (2007a, Para. 44) to craft a bill that could help the Border Patrol and satisfy Americans.

However, humanitarian claims were much less frequent in his 2007 addresses than they had been previously. Instead, he characterized emotional reactions as negative because they prevented government action, and government action was necessary to end the de facto amnesty of the status quo, a problem that “had been growing for decades” (2007a, Para. 16). Like amnesty, government inaction failed to deter future immigration by creating “a perception that America was not serious about enforcing our immigration laws and that they could be broken without consequence” (2007a, Para. 16).

The fault for the current system was that previous regimes had not taken border security seriously enough, so “past efforts at reform did not do enough to secure our borders” (2007a, Para. 16) because they “failed to address the economic reasons behind illegal immigration” (2007a, Para. 17). Therefore, without a guest worker program that could change the economic calculus for immigrants, the right’s immigration proposal was doomed to the same failures as the

current system. The “sensible” solution was to find “a comprehensive plan” that heeded the lessons of the past and understood that “all elements of the issue must be addressed together” (2007a, Para. 18).

The rhetoric Bush used in the consummation stage was underpinned by his argument about the failures of the status quo. Bush described the situation before his efforts as broken. “Prior to the administration addressing the problem we had...catch and release” (2007a, Para. 12), a policy which, when combined with weak interior verification efforts and budget shortfalls, discouraged the hard working personnel on the ground. Bush decried the “endless partisan bickering” (2007a, Para. 27) that prevented successful action, “by talking about only one aspect of the problem” (2007a, Para. 30), rather than a comprehensive solution that “learns from the mistakes of the past...If people are interested in fixing a system that’s broken, this bill is the best way to do so. It answers the longstanding concerns of the American people” (2007a, Para. 32). Bipartisanship and rationality were the cornerstones for moving away from the amnesty of the status quo, because “each side is going to have to give a little bit. Not everyone is going to get what they want, but what matters more is fixing the problem now” (2007a, Para. 27). Bush wanted action and CIR was the most pragmatic and rational way forward. On this point, his focus on the humanity of illegal immigrants all but disappeared.

In the opening of each of the major addresses in the consummation stage, Bush compared the present to the past, and in the closing he compared the present to the future. The past was a time of broken promises and nonsensical policies that failed to deal with the realities on the ground. The introduction to the June Eisenhower Executive Office Building speech explains:

I say the system isn't working because there's a lot of Americans who say that the government is not enforcing our border. I say the system is broken because there are

people coming into America to do work that Americans are not doing, and there are good, decent employers who unknowingly are hiring them, which is against the law.

The system is broken, in my judgment, because there are 11 million to 12 million people living in the shadows of a free society. The system is broken because there are people who are exploiting human beings for material gain. There are coyotes-- those are human smugglers -- charging decent people large sums of money to come and work to put food on the table for their families.

The past was the worst form of amnesty, something the Border Patrol recognized, he said: “You had your Border Patrol working hard, finding somebody trying to sneak into our country illegally” (2007a, Para. 20), but failing to slow illegal immigration because the system undermined their efforts at every turn, which “discouraged our Border Patrol agents. I talked to too many agents and heard too many stories about people saying, wait a minute, I'm tired of doing my job on the front line of protecting the border only to have the people that I have stopped coming in meld into our society” (2007a, Para. 20).

While the early paragraphs of each address marked the present as a time of action to move away from the amnesty of the status quo, the conclusion of each address highlighted the need for bipartisan action and the need for the people to pressure Congress to achieve it. In Yuma, he asked for “people not to give up, no matter how hard it looks from a legislative perspective” (Para. 46). In Glynco, he asked “for members of both political parties to stand up and show courage, and take a leadership role and do what's right for America” (2007b, Para. 59). In D.C., he asked for Congress to do “what they ran for office” to do, which was the will of their constituents, before promising to “make sure that this debate does not denigrate into name-calling and finger-pointing” (2007c, Para. 18). In each case, Bush used his address to connect

the past to amnesty, and explain that the present was the moment in which lawmakers could exercise reason and demonstrate courage by voting for CIR or they could kill real reform and return America to amnesty.

His addresses in 2007 focused on militaristic imagery, enacting the promises he had kept, and supporting a moderate middle ground. He claimed the moderate position in opposition to the largely non-existent blocs that supported deportation-only or amnesty-only schemes. He then attacked the far right, called for compromise and bipartisanship and focused on pragmatic solutions to the problem. Bush asked “for a chance to fix this problem” (2007b, Para. 36) and warned that his opposition would “sacrifice the good for the sake of the perfect” (2007c, Para. 9), supporting his claim that his opposition preferred political gamesmanship, manipulation, and prejudice to real-world practical solutions that could fix the mistakes of the past.

### **Outcomes**

Bush tried to personally whip enough support to pass CIR, working as close to the deadline as he could. “The president made a last-ditch round of phone calls” on June 28th, the day of the final vote, “to try to rescue the bill, but with his poll numbers at record lows, his appeals proved fruitless” (Weisman, 2007, Para. 15). In the end, 37 Republicans voted against the bill, along with 15 Democrats and Independent Bernie Sanders (Pear & Hulse, 2007). The bill that was debated in late June was very different from the one the Senate had passed in 2006, and the changes were exclusively concessions to conservative security hawks, but even with additional security and verification measures in place, nine Republicans who voted for the bill in 2006 changed their votes in the face of public pressure (Kondracke, 2007, Para. 10).

The Senate debated the merits of a conference committee on June 28<sup>th</sup>, during which a variety of riders and amendments were added to the bill, each one requiring additional debate

and an additional vote, stretching late into the night. A number of efforts were made to end debate and vote on the bill, but when a cloture vote was called, it failed 53 to 46, fourteen votes shy of the 60 needed to move to a full vote on the bill (Kiely, 2007). Senate majority leader Harry Reid removed the bill from consideration and it never came up again during the Bush administration. During Independence Day weekend, Ted Kennedy called the president to let him know that CIR would not be brought up in the Senate again because supporters had no hope to get enough votes to invoke cloture (Bush, 2010, p. 306), with many Democrats abandoning the reforms as the outcome of the vote became clear.

The exact details of the final Senate negotiations are unclear, but most of the public blame fell on conservative security hawks on Capitol Hill and “radio and TV shouters such as Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh...who convinced masses of citizens that the Kyl-Kennedy [sic] bill still amounted to ‘amnesty’ for 12 million illegal immigrants” (Kondracke, 2007, Para. 12). The far right “stirred up anti-Hispanic racism and certainly anti-immigrant nativism” (Kondracke, 2007, Para. 13), prompting Ted Kennedy to compare Congressional Republicans to the Jim Crow-era segregationists, before proclaiming that the lessons of history taught “you cannot stop the march for progress in the United States” (Weisman, 2007, Para. 10).

Anti-immigration Republicans claimed to vote on principle, with David Vitter calling the accusations of racism “the height of ugliness and arrogance” (Weisman, 2007, Para. 12). Jeff Sessions, a vocal critic of CIR, said he voted against the bill simply because “it would not work...it would result in 8.7 million more people in the next 20 years here illegally” (“Crushing Defeat,” 2007, Para. 6-7). At the same time, talk radio hosts such as Rush Limbaugh were openly discussing the racial dimensions of the issue and blaming Bush for conceding to liberals

“in order to continue to promote this guilt, to show that we're still committing these sins” (Limabaugh, 2006b, Para. 14-15).

Pro-immigration Republicans disputed the idea that the far right was solely responsible for the ultimate failure of the bill, particularly John McCain, who made the case that Barack Obama was at least partially responsible for the bill's demise. In the pro-immigration Republican version of events, the bill died because of the Dorgan amendment, a so-called “poison pill” (Novak, 2010) provision that was supported by pro-labor Democrats and would have ended key provisions tied to the temporary worker program after five years. In his view, the amendment frightened away potential support for the bill (Holan, 2010). 2008 Democratic presidential front-runners Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both supported the amendment (“U.S. Congress Votes Database,” 2015), lending support to the claim that Democrats were in “a campaign cycle on fast-forward” (“Immigration bill crumbles,” 2007) and preferred to run against anti-immigration Republicans in 2008 than pass a compromise bill (Weisman & VandeHei, 2006; Baker & Fletcher, 2006), particularly if killing the bill meant financial support from organized labor (Pear & Hulse, 2007; Sheppard, 2010). In the end, though, the Democrats would have been more likely to support the bill if Bush had not moved so far to the right in his efforts to develop conservative support.

What is clear is that Congress ignored the will of the American people. “Voters wanted an immigration deal,” Harry Reid acknowledged, “The problem was on the inside of this Senate chamber” (Balz, 2007, Para. 5). A Republican Senator agreed with Reid, but internalized the blame, calling his own vote against immigration reform “a profile in political cowardice” (Kondracke, 2007, Para. 1). A June Gallup poll showed that a majority of Americans wanted an immigration bill similar to the one Bush favored (Carroll, 2007, Para. 4), and about half of the



people who did not favor comprehensive reforms preferred a guest-worker program to inaction, which was the most contentious point in the debate Carroll, 2007, Para. 7). Republican Senator Mel Martinez summarized his chamber's failings quite bluntly: "The United States Senate," he argued "today bipartisanly failed the American people. That's plain and simple." (Balz, 2007, Para. 6). Chuck Schumer echoed Martinez's sentiment, calling the failure of CIR a "sad day for America" ("Crushing Defeat," 2007, Para. 8), because "everyone knows that our immigration laws are broken and a country loses some of its greatness when it can't fix a problem that everyone knows is broken ("Crushing Defeat," 2007, Para. 9).

For his part, Bush also regretted the government's failure to pass a good bill despite the fact that Americans ranked illegal immigration as the second most important issue facing the country at the time (Carroll, Para. 9). He said one of "the top concerns of the American people" was CIR, which made "Congress's failure to act on it" (Weisman, 2007, Para. 7) so disappointing. He was not willing to take the blame, however. Congress was at fault, and they needed "to prove to the American people that it can come together on hard issues," Bush said ("Crushing Defeat," 2007, Para. 4).

For many observers, the failure of CIR "added up to another example of a polarized political system in which the center could not hold" (Balz, 2007, Para. 2). The collapse of the bill instilled "deep doubt on whether America's current political leaders can solve any large problem, especially when demagogues can stir up passion against it" (Kondracke, 2007, Para. 3). Bush clearly bore some responsibility for the failure to act. Bush presided over the rise of such toxic partisanship and he exploited that environment when it suited him. The fact that he was unable to walk the vitriolic rhetoric back, find a middle ground, or pass a bill so clearly important to him is a scathing indictment of his presidency.

No matter the details of the final Senate vote, CIR died because of the xenophobic fear mongering on the far-right, which Bush had failed to quell for nearly two years. Conversation never progressed past amnesty, concessions flowed in only one direction, and Bush failed to achieve CIR. Neither Bush's efforts to mollify the right nor attacking them succeeded. Calling for rationality did little to quell the consequence-free accusations on talk-radio. If anything, it lent credence to the attacks lobbed at the administration by Rush Limbaugh and his colleagues, who saw Bush's proposal as a form of amnesty for illegal immigrants.

The strategies Bush maintained from previous stages of the movement also failed to resonate with the American audience at large. The irony of creating a binary, exclusionary frame while he called for rational discussion should have been evident to him at the time, just as the irony of calling for emotion-free discussion while he wanted to recognize immigrants' humanity should have been evident the previous year. Bush could create elaborate rhetorical strategies, but they were going to fall on deaf ears as long as he let the right shout over him and frame the debate around amnesty. It's no wonder, then, that the same Gallup poll that showed unprecedented support for CIR also described a general population that did not understand the bill. Furthermore, Republicans were four times as likely to feel negatively about Bush because of immigration reform than Democrats or moderates, even when they generally supported the comprehensive approach (Carroll, 2007).

In the consummation stage, Bush developed a strategy that was almost entirely defensive and almost entirely aimed at the audience least likely to help him. Consequently, by late summer 2007, CIR was dead. Bush would not shepherd another significant piece of legislation through Congress until the 2008 financial crisis.

## **Chapter Six: The Failure of Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

When George W. Bush sought wholesale change of America's immigration policies in his second term, he undertook a massive public outreach campaign that lasted nearly two years and consumed his attention and political capital for the duration of his efforts. His audience in America at large, who seemed to be favorable and slightly confused at the outset, turned away from him, either joining in a cacophony of polarized screaming or remaining unaware that the solution that they wanted was best represented by the policy proposal supported by the President and Senate Democrats. His popularity tanked, he failed to pass the bill he wanted, and his presidency entered the lame duck phase.

Most of the major players in comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) left the battle in a worse state for their efforts. Pro-immigration Democrats and other immigration supporters did not get a fair hearing for a generally popular idea, and even worse, were faced with a political environment poisoned for future debates. Latinos' suspicions of Anglos were confirmed, as public conversation veered into openly nativist and xenophobic territory, giving voice to the anxieties underpinning many Anglos' unwillingness to surrender their majority status. Republicans were no better off than their opponents, having lost the potential electoral might of Karl Rove's durable Republican majority as Latino voters fled from the party en masse. The Border Patrol and other security agencies gained additional resources during the push, but without the interior enforcement and temporary worker visa programs in the bill, they missed out on most of the aid they desperately needed. On a more general level, it was just as difficult to enter the country legally as it had been in 2005 and only slightly more difficult to do so illegally, answering none of the concerns raised by the Jordan commission a decade before.

The few winners in the CIR debacle were the most exploitative and morally repugnant agents in the scene, who perversely had the least at stake in the negotiations. As discussed earlier, Tom Tancredo gained a second political life by recreating his image as an anti-immigration ideologue, most recently running in 2014 for the Republican nomination for Governor of Colorado and founding the American Legacy Alliance Super PAC, which is dedicated to fighting illegal immigration (Grenoble, 2011). While Brian Bilbray lost his seat to decennial redistricting, he remained a vocal public figure whenever immigration reform came back into the news, and began lobbying for anti-immigration NGOs (Pear, 2007).

Rush Limbaugh used the immigration debate as a springboard to a \$400 million contract extension with Clear Channel in 2008 (Ryan, 2008), making him arguably the highest paid radio host in America, depending on various accounting factors. The exorbitant figures in the deal were based less on the considerable size of Limbaugh's audience than it was based on the loyalty of the "Dittoheads," on whom Limbaugh could count to push his views even after the radio was turned off (Chafets, 2008). Limbaugh demonstrated the power of the Dittoheads during the immigration debates, and the frustration Trent Lott expressed as the Dittoheads flooded Senate phone lines was a strong argument for Limbaugh's influence when negotiating with advertisers (Mindlin, 2008).

The victory of the villains in comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) is a reminder that social movements tend to unfold similarly to dramas. Social movements are generally comprised of three acts that progress from an inception stage in which characters, motivations, and obstacles are introduced or crystallized, to a crisis stage in which the movement responds to the antagonism of counter-movements or institutional opposition, to a consummation stage in which victory or defeat may be achieved. For CIR, the drama unfolded in fits and starts, so Bush was

tending to purposes normally served in the inception stage even as he moved into the consummation stage. The crisis stage stagnated for nearly a year before it rapidly accelerated into the consummation stage over a few weeks. Such an odd example of a drama is still a drama, and should have “some spot to which all roads lead” (Burke, 1973, p. 192), which is how Kenneth Burke described the progression of social movements. On a basic level, the goal of Bush’s push for CIR was the passage of a piece of legislation that improved border security and provided a path to citizenship for some portion of the 11 million illegal immigrants living in the country, but the policy was never what the typical Americans in Bush’s audience focused on. Instead, the movement was in constant flux, as Bush tried to focus his audience’s attention on border security in Tucson, followed by recognition of immigrant humanity in Irvine, which he then abandoned in favor of a return to border security in the Oval Office address, before defining CIR as an opposition to amnesty. The villains in his narratives were difficult to identify, starting as distant bureaucrats, followed by extremist leaders on both sides of the debate, before becoming the ignorant masses who wanted either amnesty or deportation for all illegal immigrants. In summary, if the push for CIR was a drama, it was a very poorly planned and executed one, in large part because of significant errors by President Bush.

### **Implications**

In this dissertation, I hoped to make three general contributions to scholarship. First, I followed David Zarefsky’s (1980) direction to examine the rhetorical dimensions of social movements in order to more fully develop the historical record of the events in which the social movement took place, paying specific attention to president-directed movements. Secondly, I hoped to discover the progression of purpose and strategies in Bush’s push for CIR. Finally, I

hoped to more fully answer several outstanding questions regarding the Bush administration and immigration rhetoric within the literature discussed in chapter two.

**Historical record.** Bush conceded the effectiveness of conservative talk radio hosts in general and Limbaugh specifically when the President visited the latter's syndicated radio program to publicize *Decision Points* in 2010, but maintained that the overall failure of the legislative efforts was the timing of his push. Had he chosen to push immigration reform in the immediate wake of his 2004 victory, Bush argued, Limbaugh would not have gained any traction, and the bill would have passed.

In fact, the primary reason George W. Bush failed to generate the support to pass CIR was a terribly designed rhetorical strategy that targeted the wrong audience and then failed to address the obstacles and the purposes of a social movement, retarding the movement's growth. In spite of a history with immigration reform dating back to his time as Governor of Texas, the President was completely unprepared for the obstinacy and vitriol from the far right, an oversight that is particularly surprising when one considers that Texas has more than its share of far right and xenophobic loudmouths. During his first term, Bush occasionally discussed immigration reform in general terms, and he returned to the topic for brief moments in his 2005 State of the Union Address. Each time he did so, the far right voiced their displeasure with what they saw as his liberal sensibilities. By November 2005's "Future of Immigration Reform" address in Tucson, Bush should have been prepared for the right wing's reaction and done a better job of seeking support among moderates from the outset.

While immigration scholarship has rarely looked at the effectiveness of various rhetorical strategies, one thoroughly covered aspect of the rhetorical situation discussed the audience attitudes most likely to contribute to support for immigration reform. Unfortunately, Bush

disregarded most of that research. Audiences are more likely to support liberal ideas on immigration reform if they are more religious, not thinking about crime, and called upon as a nation of immigrants thinking of American values. Bush used far less religion in his appeals for CIR than when discussing other issues, possibly due to the polarizing nature of religious rhetoric that could conflict with his goals of bipartisanship and compromise. Even when he most explicitly referenced God in the Irvine address, he did so within the security framework of terrorism, preventing his audience from fully accepting his argument.

Bush consistently discussed crime as a primary motivation for border security and as he did so, he primed his audience to focus more clearly on punitive security measures, which was the opposite of what the data told him to do. He split the criminal acts of coyotes from immigrants far too subtly early in his push, and as his push progressed, the militarization of the border overwhelmed any motivation he offered that did not focus on security.

Most interestingly, while Bush sporadically discussed America's historical tradition as a nation of immigrants, he consistently juxtaposed the American value of openness based in the humanity of immigrants with the value of lawfulness that condemned immigrants' presence in the country. In that way, he surrendered what might have been a powerful rhetorical strategy to his opponents. George Lakoff and his various collaborators described the split between the strict and nurturing parent frames very similarly to the split between lawfulness and openness, and as Bush's opponents painted CIR as amnesty, they more effectively employed a strict parent frame than Bush did. Whether a nurturing parent approach could be effective on immigration reform is still not clear, however, because Bush's simultaneous calls for rationality and security split the two, making it difficult to compare between the clear frames of the far right and the murky frames used by Bush.

All of these audience factors should have been clear to Bush from the outset of his push, yet his strategy was naïve in expecting a compassionate response from the far right. In retrospect, the audience factors he ignored, his surprise at the reaction of the far right, and the constant revision of his focus describe an overall rhetorical strategy that was not prepared for organized opposition or a prolonged campaign. When he did not immediately win the hearts and minds of the right wing, he had no exit strategy. There may be no better single example of Bush's failure to plan for easily predictable reactions to his immigration reform rhetoric than the question and answer session in California. Bush's inability to field those questions, even when they invited the answers he should have prepared, was a microcosm for the administration's failure to adjust to changing audience attitudes throughout Bush's push for CIR.

In addition to his failure to effectively use well-established rhetorical strategies and audience data, Bush also failed to effectively gain institutional support from obvious sources. While the erosion of support from pro-immigration organizations may have been a surprise, Bush did little to woo other interest groups. Most notably, the agriculture industry was supportive of a guest worker program. The Department of Labor reported that over half of all farm workers were illegal immigrants in 2007 and that more than 25% of all illegal employees in America worked on farms (Goodman, 2014). By 2007, farmers were "very, very nervous about the availability and cost of labor in the near future," (Strickland, 2007), prompting California citrus growers to commission the design of robotic replacements for migrant workers, a sign of the length to which farmers were willing to go to protect their labor supply. Generally, farmers were supportive of any immigration reform bill that provided them with the labor force they needed (Thompson, 2010) and could have been counted on to support any version of CIR with a temporary worker provision and oppose any version of CIR without one (Lopez, 2013). While



Bush occasionally mentioned farm labor, he never focused his overall messages on agricultural needs. It is surprising that he did not court the agriculture lobby's influence more seriously, considering the influence agricultural lobbies held with Republicans in many Midwest states and the populism associated with farm support during the Bush administration.

**The presidency and social movements.** The second implication of this research is that the rhetoric Bush employed confirms David Zarefsky's (1980) argument that social movements are not fundamentally different from campaigns or government actions. The primary rhetorical constraint that determines the similarity of texts within a genre is purpose (Rowland, 1991), and Bush's purposes in each stage followed the purposes that scholars generally attribute to social movements.

As Bush entered the inception stage, he needed to garner attention for his effort, generate consensus about why illegal immigration was a problem, and establish his credibility as a leader who could effect change. Those purposes are not unique to social movements, however. Grabbing an audience's attention, presenting a clear thesis, and establishing the speaker's credibility are among the requirements for any effort designed to produce or oppose change. The inception stage shares its purpose with virtually every other type of rhetoric that advocates action, unsurprising when one interprets Griffin's (1960, p. 460) observation that movements begin when people "rise up and cry *No* to the existing order" (emphasis in original) as a simple recognition of an imperfection demanding action. An imperfection marked by urgency is, after all, simply an exigence, which is a prerequisite in the rhetorical situation.

Later stages offer little additional clarity. In the crisis stage, which chapter four noted is less researched than the inception stage, problems arise for the movement that often include the rise of counter-movements. Once again little distinguishes the purposes facing a social

movement from typical rhetorical action in the face of opposition. The same is true of the consummation stage, in which the movement succeeds or fails, marked by accomplishing the goals of the movement or followers losing interest. Again, the purposes served and problems confronted by social movements are common to many calls advocacy for action or inaction, and face few constraints due to their movement structure.

One distinction that scholars used to distinguish social movements from other forms of collective action has been the absence of institutional power available to social movements. Bush's struggle to maintain party support while he was unpopular among the American voting base demonstrates the limits of institutional power. If a president cannot trust his own party apparatus, it is unclear how much the institution of the presidency offers a rhetor that is not available to social movement leaders. Bush used a variety of strategies exclusively available to him through his role as the President, including speaking in front of stands full of National Guard troops, taking photographs in military vehicles, and giving a speech from the Oval Office. He also tried grass root strategies, including speaking in small venues about local concerns, staging media events, and trying to adopt the role of outsider taking on bureaucracy, but he had little success with any of these, suggesting that institutional advantages were not an important distinction between his rhetorical efforts and traditional social movements. To varying extents the counter-movements that opposed Bush were more capable of organizing broad support and directing followers than Bush was, whether that involved mailing bricks to Capitol Hill, occupying Senate phone lines, or marching in massive public demonstrations, further clouding the idea that acting inside traditional power structures is a major advantage that uniquely shapes the rhetoric of the presidency, while working outside the system uniquely shapes social movement rhetoric.

Furthermore, while traditional social movement scholarship focuses on reform movements acting against conservative institutions, Bush's push for CIR was a struggle between institutional reform efforts and a conservative movement, further calling into question common definition of social movements. Zarefsky cautioned against the idea that social movement rhetoric could be identified as an exclusive and exhaustive category of rhetoric and Bush's push for CIR certainly supported his view.

A further implication in this research is that Zarefsky may not have gone far enough. The difference between social movement rhetoric and other forms of appeals is slight at best and the models offered by research into social movements provides little clear trajectory for social movement leaders to follow. While social movement criticism provides a helpful device to organize a large text or series of smaller texts working along the same progression, that criticism is not prescriptive, due to the lack of constraining purpose even among rhetoric which seems on face to function like a social movement.

**The George W. Bush legacy.** A final implication concerns the body of research that studies Bush's place within the rhetorical presidency. This scholarship was discussed in chapter two and proceeds from the idea that Bush's rhetoric was so partisan, ideological, and dishonest that it represented a paradigm shift in the way that the president addresses the American people. When pushing CIR, Bush tried to engage traditional strategies of reason and openness, only to be undone by the partisan forces he helped create.

Clearly, the world of CIR was poisoned by hyper-partisanship, making the middle ground hard to find and impossible to defend, even as various polls consistently reported that the majority of Americans favored moderate approaches. In order to explain how the hyper-partisanship sank Bush's version of CIR, many of the most vocal critics of Bush's partisanship

and demagoguery work from the assumption that CIR was designed as a cynical ploy to lure in unsuspecting Latinos (Edwards & Herder, 2012; Hartnett & Mercieca, 2007; Mercieca & Vaughn, 2008). While Karl Rove's vision of a durable Republican majority was certainly appealing to the party at the outset of the movement and employed as a way to garner support from moderates, there is little evidence to support the idea that Bush was exploiting the Hispanic population or operating from a sinister motive instead of pushing what he thought was an effective policy solution that recognized immigrants as human. As discussed in chapter one, Bush demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to immigrant issues since his days as Governor and the frequency of his public appeals in support of Barack Obama's CIR push relative to his silence on many other issues after leaving office is further evidence that Bush genuinely cared about the issue. He repeatedly called his failure to achieve CIR his biggest disappointment, including during his Democratic successor's battle with Congressional Republicans on a similar plan, which is hardly the behavior of a cynical Anglo politician hoping to dupe Latinos.

The distinction between an exploitative Bush and a sincere one is more than a question of morality or an attempt to recast his legacy in a more positive light. The sincerity of his desire explains the most important oversight in many of the previous studies undertaken on the topic, which is that if Bush simply wanted to bolster Republicans at the polls, he should have adjusted his message towards deportation and abandoned the temporary worker program. It makes no sense for Bush to stake all of his remaining political capital on a battle with his own party unless doing so might achieve a policy about which he had strong personal convictions.

It's possible that Bush attempted to return presidential rhetoric to rational ground and openness because he recognized that this issue was too important to fit into argument forms based on polarization and partisanship. If so, it's telling that the most influential architect of the

toxic political environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognized the shortcomings of the argumentative environment he helped create. It is also possible that he simply misread the audience, failed to predict the reaction of the far right, and lacked the political clout to fix his mistakes. If that is the case, then the same architect of 21<sup>st</sup> century hyper-partisanship did not recognize what he had created. In either case, the historical record of CIR and the Bush presidency should reflect a sincere politician who managed to provide the seeds of his own undoing when he betrayed the democratic principles on which the institution of the presidency was built.

On a simpler level, the findings of my research support the idea that it is difficult to move opinion when a speaker has limited power and entrenched constituents are angered. The difficulty Bush encountered when trying to persuade his audience is illustrative of the world he created, but his failure should not be considered a damning indictment of his intentions.

## **Conclusion**

George W. Bush failed to achieve the public support necessary to pass “a good bill” (Bush, 2005, para. 38), in spite of broad approval of the general provisions of the bill. He tried strategies based on definition, associations with the Border Patrol and the war in Iraq, simple security claims, calls for rationality based alternately on pragmatic political feasibility and the spiritual value of immigrant humanity, and finally he tried manipulative dichotomies between his policy and straw-person opposition. None of the strategies translated to broad support on either the left or the right. He was eventually defeated by vitriolic rhetoric from the right wing that used strategies of obstinacy and labelling. Returning to the metaphor of the drama, perhaps F. Scott Fitzgerald’s comment is apropos: “Show me a hero and I’ll write you a tragedy” (Bianculli, 2015). As Bush worked to paint himself as a hero throughout the push for CIR, he fought against the outcome his actions had helped create and he was undone by his own failings.

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