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College of Art,  
Metaphor as a Cognitive-Semantic Interface: Conceptual Mapping and  
Ideological Framing in U.S. Immigration Discourse**

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**Abstract**

This study contributes to theoretical and analytical research on the conceptual metaphor as a cognitive-semantic interface in the politicized context of immigration rhetoric in the U.S. This study has a theoretical foundation based on a unified system that is an interplay between Conceptual Metaphor Theory as well as Critical Discourse Analysis; the theses are that metaphor is not only an ornamental part of rhetoric, but also a constitutive process by which ideological beliefs are cognitively organized and operationalized through a discourse. A qualitative cognitive-discourse analysis was carried out on a purposefully collected corpus of ten authoritative texts such as presidential speeches, executive orders, and party platforms created between 2014 and 2024 and reflecting both the restrictionist-securitization and inclusive-reform viewpoints to research this proposition.

The discussion shows that there is a systematic and ideologically polarized application of conceptual metaphors. The source domains of conflict, natural disaster and fortification (e.g., IMMIGRATION AS INVASION/WAR; IMMIGRATION AS FLOOD; NATION AS FORTress) predominantly organize and cognitively define restrictionist discourse to justify the validity of policies of exclusion, border control, and deportation. Conversely, inclusive discourse is organized along the lines of source domains of journey, kinship, and contribution (e.g., IMMIGRATION AS JOURNEY/PATH; NATION AS FAMILY/HOME; IMMIGRANTS AS ECONOMIC ASSETS), to accord immigrants the status of agentic people, with potential membership of the national community, and as such, the justification of policies of pathway creation, family reunification, and integration.

This body of evidence is a strong affirmation of hypotheses in the study and shows that metaphor is a dynamic interface with underlying cognitive models being semantically actualized in the process of addressing specific ideological tasks: creating perceptions of immigrants, defining policy issues, and naturalizing special visions of national identity. The study finds that incommensurability of these figurative framings helps sustain the polarization deep-rooted in U.S.



immigration discourses since each side of the argument has a different conceptual world with divergent logic of belonging, security, and morality.

The study makes a substantive contribution to the fields of cognitive linguistics, political discourse analysis, and migration studies by empirically illustrating how metaphor cognitively grounds ideology in public discourse. It also provides opportunities of future research such as diachronic, cross-cultural and multimodal studies of metaphorical framing in immigration politics.

**Keywords:** conceptual metaphor, cognitive-semantic interface, immigration discourse, ideological framing, critical discourse analysis, U.S. politics, polarization.

## 1- Introduction

The concept of sovereignty, security, and identity are abstract ideas that are brought to life and given practical application in the domain of political discourse. Political actors and institutions navigate this complexity and base their actions on metaphor as they attempt to make the intangible borders walls, waves of migration, national families, and the paths to citizenship. These metaphors are not simple rhetorical flourishes, but have since been accepted in cognitive linguistics as part and parcel of thought, to define the ways political realities are thought and talked about (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). No other area is more revealing of this than in the highly controversial field of U.S. immigration discourse, where dissonant metaphorical designs are not just accounts of policy variation but are actually productive of the terms of discussion, who is and who is not a member, what is and what is not a threat and what answers are possible.

In spite of this appreciation, there is still a great gap in theory and analysis. On the one hand, foundational cognitive theory offers a good explanation of the metaphor as the individual, in-mind mapping process- a cognitive scheme (Lakoff, 1993). Critical discourse studies, on the other hand, are better at the analysis of metaphor as a semantic and pragmatic role of persuasion and ideology as a tool of the people (Charteris-Black, 2011; Musolff, 2016). The question that has not been fully researched is the location of the interaction between these two dimensions: the dynamic mechanism by which embodied cognitive models are applied in language to do certain ideological work in a specific socio-political situation. This study argues that metaphor itself functions as this cognitive-semantic interface, and that the duality of the latter can be most evident in polarized discourse when there are conflicting world views at play with each other.

To explore the given suggestion, the current paper dwells on the example of modern American immigration discourse. The field provides a perfect analytical location, with radically divergent policy stances and abundant and coherent use of figurative language on all parties. Through analyzing the speech of the main supporters of restrictionist and inclusive policy agendas, this study aims to clarify



the main process of metaphorical cognition in action. The specific research questions, aims, and hypotheses used to guide the study are as follows:

### The Questions

**RQ1:** What are the dominant conceptual metaphors and their structural mappings in restrictionist versus inclusive U.S. immigration discourse?

**RQ2:** How do these contrasting metaphorical mappings function to construct ideologically opposed framings of immigrants, policy solutions, and national identity?

### The Aims

**Aim 1:** To systematically identify, classify, and contrast the primary conceptual metaphors and their source-to-target domain mappings used by key proponents of restrictive and inclusive U.S. immigration policies.

**Aim 2:** To critically analyze the ideological framing accomplished by these metaphors, explaining how specific mappings legitimize distinct political actions, shape perceptions of immigrants, and reinforce particular visions of national identity.

### The Hypotheses

**H1:** It is hypothesized that restrictionist discourse will be dominated by metaphors with source domains of conflict, burden, and natural disaster (e.g., IMMIGRATION AS WAR/INVASION; IMMIGRATION AS FLOOD/DISEASE), while inclusive discourse will be dominated by metaphors with source domains of journey, contribution, and integration (e.g., IMMIGRATION AS JOURNEY/PATH; NATION AS FAMILY/HOME).

**H2:** It is hypothesized that the conflict/burden metaphors in restrictionist discourse will function to frame immigrants as threats to security and economic stability, thereby legitimizing policies of control and exclusion, whereas the journey/integration metaphors in inclusive discourse will function to frame immigrants as contributors to national renewal and diversity, thereby legitimizing policies of pathways and inclusion.

Through testing these hypotheses, the study will achieve a substantive contribution by showing that metaphor is not simply a conjunction between thought and language but the very place ideology is cognitively instantiated and semantically accomplished. The next chapter defines the theoretical framework of the current investigation that summarizes the main findings of the conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis to represent the model of metaphor as a cognitive-semantic interface in a formalized way.

## 2-Literature Review and Theoretical Framework



## 2.1. Introduction

The chapter forms the theoretical and conceptual framework of exploring metaphor as a cognitive-semantic interface in political speech. It follows the development of the study of metaphor since it was viewed as a tool of ornamental linguistic means to its modern conception of a core component of human thought. This cognitive approach to the analysis of political discourse is, in its turn, reviewed in terms of applying the same approach critically to discourse analysis, specifically, when discussing the ideologically charged areas. Combining the main findings of the conceptual metaphor theory with the critical discourse methods, but accepting the major criticisms by the researchers, the chapter eventually leads to the creation of the unified model of metaphor as the dynamic cognitive-semantic interface that the proposed study adheres to.

## 2.2. The Cognitive Revolution: Conceptual Metaphor Theory

A paradigmatic change of the modern perception of metaphor happened with the creation of cognitive linguistics, in the first place, because of the works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Breaking with centuries-old rhetorical traditions that saw metaphor as a form of decorative language (Aristotle, ca. 335 BCE/1991), these scholars claimed that the very system of ordinary conceptual modes, with the help of which we think and act, is metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). This Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) redefines metaphor as a mental process, but not as a linguistic process.

In its most basic perspective, CMT assumes that metaphor is the comprehension of a domain of concepts using another (Kovecses, 2010). This is ideally expressed as CONCEPTual DOMAIN A is CONceptual Domain B, in which a more abstract target domain (A) is understood in terms of the organization of a more concrete source domain (B). An example is that we conceptualize LIFE via the domain of JOURNEY (LIFE IS A JOURNEY), ARGUMENTs with the domain of WAR (ARGUMENT IS WAR), and LOVE with both domains of JOURNEY and other physical domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). A conceptual domain is any organised system of experience; in this way, we use the orderly systematised knowledge we have of journeys to plan out our perception of the abstract course of life.

This mental process metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) discuss, gives us the ability to apply the physical logic of sensorimotor experience (such as grasping, seeing, or moving) when our reasoning about subjective abstract experience (such as understanding, knowing, or loving). A conceptual metaphor is a tacit, implicit device on which all expressions in metaphorical forms are derived. Out of LOVE IS A JOURNEY there comes phrases like "We are at crossroads," "Our relationship is off track and We are moving in different directions. On the same note, ARGUMENT IS WAR produces phrases such as he attacked my argument,



her claims are indefensible and I demolished his position (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). This theory made metaphor one of the chief human thoughts cognitive structures.

The deep penetration and significance of this metaphorical thinking is depicted in the historical accounts of humanity. According to the cognitive linguistic scholarship, what the myth of Oedipus boils down is that he was able to crack the riddle of the Sphinx by more than figuratively plotting the phases of a day (morning, midday, evening) onto the phases of human life (infancy, maturity, old age) (Kovecses, 2010). This archetypal instance goes to show that metaphor is not a rhetoric device but a necessary cognitive instrument of visualizing and resolving basic issues of interpretation.

### **2.3. Critiques and Refinements of Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Although foundational, CMT has inspired academic debate and refinement. Another important strand of criticism is with regard to the assertions of the theory as to the primacy, universality and unidirectionality of metaphorical mappings. Other researchers believe that the theory may be unnecessarily deterministic in terms of structuring all abstract thinking by the deterministic impact of embodied, sensorimotor experience.

As an example, Howe (2007) explicitly questions the fact that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is needed, by implying that the category of argument as understood and as used by English speakers, need not necessarily be grounded in experience of a physical confrontation. He assumes that such knowledge could be more directly influenced by discursive practices and particular situations of verbal dispute itself. To add on this, Ritchie (2003) wonders whether one conceptual metaphor plays the overriding role in structuring a multifaceted concept. By examining real discourse, he suggests that several, context-specific metaphors (e.g. ARGUMENT IS A GAME OF CHESS, ARGUMENT IS A Building) may work together and their involvement is dependent on communicative objectives, as well as situational conditions, rather than a general mental law.

These criticisms do not reject the cognitive account of metaphor, but point to a significant weakness in earlier accounts of it: that it is inclined to make some decontextualised, general cognitive projections without paying full attention to their variability, strategic choice, and the rhetorical role they play in real language use. It is this criticality that forms the necessary scholarly space that is intended to be filled by the current study.

### **2.4. Metaphor in Political Discourse: The Ideological Turn**

Existing between the cognitive and the contextual, the extensive body of research has been fruitfully employed in the interpretation of political discourse by means of the application of CMT. This work shifts focus from metaphor as a private



cognitive structure to its public, persuasive function. Theorists of this school show how conceptual metaphors are strategically deployed in certain discursive situations to convince audiences, justify policies, and naturalize certain forms of worldview (Charteris-Black, 2011; Musolff, 2016).

Metaphors play an essential ideological work in politics. They construct policies as natural imperatives (e.g. a war on drugs), characterize social categories in a given way (e.g. immigrants as a flood or tidal wave), and legitimize the actions of the state (e.g. a war to drain the swamp of corruption) (Chilton, 2004; Hart, 2010). This strategy is formalized in Charteris-Black's (2011) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which is a mix of corpus linguistics and pragmatic analysis that can be used to conduct a systematic survey of ideological motivation in metaphor choice. On the same note, Musolff (2016) looks at how metaphors can form compelling units of persuasion, so-called scenarios or mini-narratives (e.g., the body politic scenario), which determine how people understand complex problems.

Of specific interest to the present research is work that specifically targets the discourse of immigration. Brown Tide Rising by Santa Ana (2002) gives out an effective template. By critically examining the media discourse of the U.S. he chronicles the systematic framing of the Latinos through dehumanizing metaphors of nature (floods, tides), animals, and disease, which are used to justify the restrictive policies. The given research is a clear illustration of how the semantic-pragmatic and ideological role of metaphor is situated in the actual socio-political practice.

## **2.5. Synthesis: Metaphor as a Cognitive-Semantic Interface**

The preceding review indicates that there are two strong yet loosely coupled academic debates: the first is based on the cognitive architecture of metaphor (CMT) and the second is its discursive-ideological role in situations such as politics. The first can be a contextual, whereas the second one can occasionally assume metaphor as a pre-prepared rhetorical device that can be fully explained as to its cognitive basis and persuasive strength (Semino, 2008; Steen, 2011). The critique of Howe (2007) and Ritchie (2003) also adds to the importance of placing cognitive mappings into context in real usage of language.

This paper proposes that such seeming dichotomy is not only unnecessary but also restrictive. The metaphor is, in its turn, both cognitive and semantic; it is the active tool of interaction between pre-linguistic conceptualized structures in the selection, adaption, and expression of certain discursive conventions in order that communicative and persuasive purposes are achieved. Thus, the proposed research is an Integrated Cognitive-Semantic Interface Model.

In this model:



1. The Cognitive Dimension offers the profound, cross-culturally accessible inventory of systematic mappings (e.g., IMMIGRATION AS JOURNEY, IMMIGRATION AS INVASION) which limit and create potential manifestations.
2. The Semantic-Discursive Dimension is concerned with the strategic, context-specific realisation of these mappings in particular forms of language, in particular genres of language, and in particular events of communication (e.g., a presidential speech, a party platform).
3. The Interface is the practice of the conceptual mapping. It is the operation of applying a cognitive model to a given discursive context, thus performing ideological framing - creating a particular, intended version of social reality (Fairclough, 2003).

This paradigm assumes that, through the examination of the use and struggle over particular conceptual mappings within a polarized domain, i.e. U.S. immigration talk, the process through which cognition becomes ideology can be followed empirically. It combines the cognitive rigor of CMT with the contextual sensitivity of critical discourse analysis, which provides a consistent approach to the research questions in Chapter 1.

Table1:The cognitive-Semantic Interface Model of Metaphor

Dimension	Description	Key Concepts	Example in Immigration Discourse
1- Cognitive Dimension	Deep, cross-culturally accessible conceptual mappings from source to target domains. Provides the underlying mental structures for metaphorical thought.	Conceptual Metaphor Theory(CMT);Embodied cognition	IMMIGRATION AS JOURNEY, IMMIGRATION AS INVASION
2-Semantic-Discursive Dimension	Strategic, context-specific realization of cognitive mapping in actual language use within particular genres, texts, and communicative events.	Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA);Genre; Ideological Framing; Pragmatic Function	Use of “path to citizenship’ (journey frame) in a presidential speech
3-The interface(Process)	The dynamic mechanism through which cognitive models are selected,	Framing; Legitimation; Naturalization; Persuasion	Applying the INVASION metaphor to justify border wall funding.



	adapted, and expressed in discourse to perform ideological work and shape social reality.		
Theoretical Integration	Combines the cognitive rigor of CMT with the contextual sensitivity of CDA. Allows for empirical tracing of how ideology is cognitively instantiated and semantically accomplished.	Integrated Cognitive-Semantic Approach; Critical Metaphor Analysis.	Analyzing how NATION AS FAMILY legitimizes inclusive immigration policies.

## 2.6. Chapter Summary and Link to Methodology

This chapter has traced the conceptual path of the cognitive conceptualization of metaphor through the ultimate phase of putting metaphor into critical use in political language, and finally the introduction of the two views into the cognitive-semantic interface model. This model has a direct bearing on the methodological approach that is specified in the following chapter and operationalizes the analysis of conceptual mapping to expose its role in ideological framing in a specifiable set of the U.S. discourse on immigration. The tools given by the methodology will enable the systematic identification of the metaphor, structural mapping of the metaphor and the interpretation of their ideological implications, thus, testing the proposed interface model.

## 3-Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains methodological framework and the analytical steps that have been used to address the research questions and test the hypotheses that were previously stated in Chapter 1. Based upon the conceptual framework of metaphor as a cognitive-semantic interface proposed in Chapter 2, the research project selected a qualitative, text-based cognitive-discourse analysis. The methodology will be structured in such a way that it allows discovering the conceptual metaphors that organize the U.S. immigration discourse and the ways that these metaphors are ideologically framed critically. This chapter is divided into four major parts (1) the research design and rationale, (2) description and justification of the corpus, (3) the step-by-step analytical process, and (4) discussion of analytical reliability.

### 3.2. Research Design and Rationale



This paper follows a qualitative and interpretative research design based on synthesis of both cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis (Charteris-Black, 2011; Hart, 2010). The design is chosen due to its ability to give a profound, intertextual insight into how language constructs social reality an aim that is consistent with the objective of the study to understand the interface between the cognitive structures and the discursive practice.

### **The rationale for this design is three fold:**

**1. To Facilitate Depth over Breadth:** The discourse of immigration is always complex and ideologically charged, and a qualitative approach can provide a detailed and contextual analysis needed to track subtle metaphorical mappings and persuasive implication they have (Musolff, 2016).

**2. To Enable Theory-Driven Analysis:** The research is no longer a quantitative corpus research investigation into the statistical frequency but a test-theory effort. The design permits to apply the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2011) to targeted texts in order to test the suggested cognitive-semantic interface model.

**3. To Accommodate Critical Interpretation:** The research questions involve the way metaphors form ideology, which requires interpretative engagement with text, context, and potential social consequences a core strength of qualitative discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003).

### **3.3. Corpus Selection and Description**

The corpus is composed of the texts that were created during 2015 - 2024, a period marked by intense national debate on immigration in the United States.

#### **3.3.1. Corpus Composition**

The corpus is divided into two sub-corpora representing the two primary ideological positions identified in the research hypotheses (see Table 2).

#### **Sub-Corpus A: Restrictionist/Securitization Discourse**

1. Trump, D. (2015, June 16). Presidential Announcement Speech.
2. Trump, D. (2018, October). Remarks on the Illegal Immigration Crisis and Border Security.
3. The White House. (2017). Executive Order 13768: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States.
4. Republican National Committee. (2016). Republican Party Platform: Immigration Section.
5. DeSantis, R. (2022, September). Governor Ron DeSantis Remarks on Illegal Immigration.



### Sub-Corpus B: Inclusive/Reform Discourse

1. Obama, B. (2014, November 20). Address to the Nation on Immigration.
2. Biden, J. (2021, February). Remarks on Immigration and Family Reunification [Executive Orders].
3. American Immigration Council. (2021). The Dream Act of 2021 – Summary Fact Sheet.
4. Democratic National Committee. (2020). Democratic Party Platform: Immigration Section.
5. Ocasio-Cortez, A. (2021, July). Congressional Speech on Border Policy.

**Table 2: Two primary ideological position**

Sub-corpus	Ideological Frame	No. of Texts	Time Period	Genres Included
A	Restrictionist/Securitization	5	2015-2022	Speech, Executive Order, Party Platform
B	Inclusive/Reform	5	2014-2021	Speech, Policy Summary, Party Platform

#### 3.3.2. Justification for Selection

In order to achieve validity and analytical power, the corpus was constructed based on four principles:

**1. Balance and Comparability:** The corpus includes an equal number of texts from each ideological camp, enabling a systematic comparative analysis as required by RQ1 and H1 (Koller, 2004).

**2. Genre Variation:** It incorporates multiple genres (political speeches, executive orders, party platforms, policy summaries). This enables the analysis to examine the role of the cognitive-semantic interface in various communicative contexts and formality of the communicative contexts.

**3. Source Authority and Influence:** The sources of the texts are major political participants (Presidents, a leading Governor, a leading progressive Congresswoman), and official party documents. This makes the texts powerful and reflective of mainstream and authoritative voices in each of the ideological sides, and not peripheral commentary.

**4. Accessibility and Verifiability:** All texts are publicly available from official government websites (.gov), party archives, or reputable institutional sources (e.g., the American Immigration Council). This guarantees transparency and allows for the replication of the analysis.



### 3.4. Analytical Framework and Procedure

This section outlines the step-by-step analytical procedure used to identify, analyze, and interpret conceptual metaphors within the selected corpus. The procedure is adapted from established protocols in Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) (Charteris-Black, 2011; Steen, 2011), and is structured into three iterative phases: identification, interpretation, and ideological framing analysis.

#### 3.4.1. Phase 1: Metaphor Identification

The first phase involves a close reading of each text to identify linguistic metaphors - words or expressions used in a non-literal sense that imply a cross-domain mapping (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The procedure is as follows:

**1. Contextual Reading:** Each text is read thoroughly to understand its overall argument, tone, and context.

**2. Linguistic Marker Extraction:** Potential metaphorical expressions are highlighted based on semantic tension between the contextual meaning and a more basic, physical meaning (e.g., “flood of immigrants,” “path to citizenship,” “broken system”).

**3. Categorization by Source Domain:** Identified expressions are tentatively grouped according to their implied source domains (e.g., WATER, JOURNEY, MACHINE, WAR, FAMILY).

#### 3.4.2. Phase 2: Conceptual Mapping Analysis

In this phase, linguistic metaphors are analyzed to reconstruct the underlying conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

**1. Inferring Conceptual Metaphors:** For each group of related linguistic metaphors, the underlying conceptual metaphor is formulated in the standard “TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN” format (e.g., IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD; NATION IS A FAMILY).

**2. Mapping Structure Elaboration:** The systematic correspondences (mappings) between the source and target domains are detailed. For example, under IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD:

- **Source:** Flood water → Target: Immigrants
- **Source:** Force/volume → Target: Number/pace of migration
- **Source:** Damage/destruction → Target: Social/economic harm
- **Source:** Containment/barriers → Target: Border walls/policies

**3. Cross-Textual Consolidation:** Conceptual metaphors are compared across texts within each sub-corpus to identify dominant, recurrent mappings characteristic of restrictionist or inclusive discourse.



### 3.4.3. Phase 3: Ideological Framing Analysis

The final phase critically examines the discursive and ideological functions of the identified conceptual metaphors (Musolff, 2016).

**1. Framing Effects Analysis:** For each dominant metaphor, the study analyzes how it constructs a particular “frame” for understanding immigration:

- How are immigrants represented (e.g., as passive water, as agentive travelers, as invaders)?
- How is the problem defined (e.g., as a natural disaster, as a bureaucratic failure, as a moral test)?
- What solutions are implied or legitimized (e.g., walls, pathways, integration)?

**2. Contrastive Comparison:** The framing effects of metaphors from Sub-corpus A are systematically contrasted with those from Sub-corpus B to reveal opposing ideological constructions, as hypothesized in H1 and H2.

**3. Contextual Interpretation:** The discussion takes the interaction of metaphor choice with genre, speaker identity, and historical context into account to support specific political discourse and political agenda.

### 3.4.4. Analytical Tools and Documentation

To ensure rigor and transparency:

- A coding manual was created that would be used to standardize the identification and categorization of metaphors.
- The decisions, emerging patterns and interpretative reflections were recorded in an analytical log in which analytical decisions were made.
- The results are provided in Chapter 4 as tables of metaphors that are dominant and summarize linguistic instantiations of conceptualizations and mappings and framing roles of each sub-corpus.

## 3.5. Reliability and Validity

This section addresses the measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, crucial for establishing the credibility and rigor of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the interpretative nature of metaphor analysis, specific strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

### 3.5.1. Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is the stability and dependability of the process and outcome of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase reliability, the following steps were performed:



**1. Coder Training and Pilot Analysis:** The primary researcher was also subjected to a training period, which engaged the analysis of sample texts that were not part of the main corpus and the application of agreed metaphor identification guidelines (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). This procedure allowed getting acquainted with the analysis protocol and then transferring it to the official corpus.

**2. Use of an Analytical Codebook:** A detailed codebook was developed prior to the analysis, defining key terms (e.g., “linguistic metaphor,” “conceptual mapping,” “source domain”) and providing clear, operational criteria for metaphor identification and categorization. This codebook served as a consistent reference point throughout the study.

**3. Intra-Coder Consistency Checks:** To reduce the time-effects on the results, the researcher re-analyzed a random 20% sample of the corpus texts two weeks later. The results were checked against the first analysis to ascertain the consistency of metaphor identification and classification and the agreed rate was set at more than 90%.

**4. Transparent Documentation:** All the decisions of analysis including ambiguous cases and their resolution were recorded in an analytical log. It is an audit trail that enables the re-creation of the analytical procedure and improves the study transparency (Nowell et al., 2017).

### 3.5.2. Validity

Validity is an issue of the precision and the wellness of the interpretations made of the data (Maxwell, 2013). The validity of the study was enhanced by a number of strategies:

**1-Theoretical Validity:** The research is based on the solid theoretical synthesis (Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis), and the analytical process is clearly obtained by this synthesis. The interpretations are always connected to the theoretical concepts so that the findings are theoretically coherent and meaningful.

**2-Data and Source Validity:** As explained in Section 3.3, the texts were taken based on authoritative, influential and verifiably publicly sources. This premeditated sampling makes the discourse under analysis reflective of the mainstream political standpoints regarding the U.S. immigration, thus, augmenting the truthfulness of arguments concerning the ideological framing in the specified field.

### 3-Analytical validity (Credibility):

**Triangulation of Evidence:** The analysis is based on overlaps of evidence between multiple texts in each sub-corpus and a combination of the texts of other



genres (speeches, policy documents, and party platforms). This cross-textual support underlines the point that identified patterns of metaphors are ideological productions which are patterned, rather than due to specific rhetorical flourishes.

**Peer Debriefing:** The initial findings and interpretations were shared with the course instructor and other individuals who majored in discourse analysis. It was a process that aided in the breaking of assumptions, alternative interpretation, and narrowing down the focus of analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Thick Description:** Direct quotes and elaborate examples of the texts are used in describing the findings (Chapter 4), to explain the metaphors and mappings identified.

**4. Interpretive Validity:** The study admits that it is an interpretative stance. Instead of purporting to discover one, in fact, the true meaning of metaphor, it attempts to offer a possible, evidence-based and theoretically-informed description of the work of metaphor in this discourse. The systematic nature and the overt opposition of two conflicting ideological stances reduce possible bias of the researcher and objectify the analysis.

Following these procedures of reliability and validity, the research is meant to generate a rigorous, transparent, and credible analysis that can meet its purpose of shedding light on the cognitive-semantic interface of metaphor in the immigration discourse in the U.S.

## Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the systematic metaphor analysis applied to the defined corpus of U.S. immigration discourse. The findings are structured to address the research questions by first identifying dominant conceptual metaphors in each sub-corpus, then analyzing their ideological framing functions.

### 4.2. Dominant Conceptual Metaphors and Mappings

#### 4.2.1. Restrictionist / Securitization Discourse (Sub-corpus A)

##### 1. IMMIGRATION AS INVASION/WAR

Dominant in: Trump (2018), DeSantis (2022), Republican Platform (2016)

##### Example from Trump (2018):

"At this very moment, large, well-organized caravans of migrants are marching towards our southern border. Some people call it an 'invasion.' It's like an invasion. They have violently overrun the Mexican border... We have to have our borders. We will defend our borders; we will defend our country."

Conceptual Mapping:



• **Source:** WAR/INVASION → **Target:** IMMIGRATION

- Invading army → Migrants in caravans
- Marching/advancing → Movement toward border
- Border → Battlefront/national boundary
- Defense → Border enforcement policies
- Victory → Stopping the "invasion"

## 2. IMMIGRATION AS DANGEROUS WATER/FLOOD

Dominant in: Trump (2015, 2018), Executive Order 13768

**Example from Trump (2015):**

"The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems... When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us."

**Example from Trump (2018):**

"The current influx, if not halted, threatens to overwhelm our immigration system and our communities..."

Conceptual Mapping:

• **Source:** FLOOD/WASTE → **Target:** IMMIGRATION

- Floodwaters/ dumping - Immigrants.
- Force/volume - Immigration scale.
- Container/ground - United States.
- Overwhelm/strain - Systems pressure.
- Contamination - Social/economic issues.

## 3. NATION AS HOUSE/FORTRESS

Dominant in: Executive Order 13768, Republican Platform, Trump speeches

**Example from Executive Order 13768:**

"Interior enforcement of our Nation's immigration laws is critically important to the national security and public safety of the United States... We cannot faithfully execute the immigration laws of the United States if we exempt classes or categories of removable aliens..."

**Example from Trump (2018):**

"We have to have our borders... We will defend our borders."

Conceptual Mapping:

• **Source:** HOUSE/FORTRESS → **Target:** NATION

- Walls/doors → Border controls



- Foundation → Rule of law
- Intruders → Illegal immigrants
- Security system → Immigration enforcement
- Owner → American citizens/government

#### 4.2.2. Inclusive/Reform Discourse (Sub-corpus B)

##### 1. IMMIGRATION AS JOURNEY/PATH

Dominant in: Obama (2014), Dream Act summary, Democratic Platform

###### Example from Obama (2014):

"We'll build on our progress at the border... I'll make it easier and faster for high-skilled immigrants... to stay and contribute to our economy... If you've been in America for more than five years... you'll be able to apply to stay in this country... You can come out of the shadows and get right with the law."

###### Example from Democratic Platform (2020):

"We will ensure that our nation continues to prize diversity and compassion, and welcomes those who yearn to participate in our great democratic experiment by creating a humane, 21st century immigration system..."

Conceptual Mapping:

- **Source:** JOURNEY → **Target:** IMMIGRATION PROCESS
- Traveler → Immigrant
- Path/road → Legal process
- Shadows → Undocumented status
- Coming into light → Legalization
- Destination → Citizenship/integration

##### 2. NATION AS FAMILY/HOME

Dominant in: Obama (2014), Biden (2021), Democratic Platform

###### Example from Obama (2014):

"We are and always will be a nation of immigrants. We were strangers once, too... What makes us Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal... That's the tradition we must uphold."

###### Example from Biden (2021) Executive Order:



"We're going to work to undo the moral and national shame... that literally... ripped children from the arms of their families... and with no plan... to reunify the children... and their parents."

Conceptual Mapping:

- **Source:** FAMILY → **Target:** NATION
- Parent → Government/society
- Children → Immigrants/citizens
- Family separation → Detention/deportation
- Reunification → Policy reform
- Home → United States
- Strangers → New immigrants

### 3. IMMIGRATION AS CONTRIBUTION/RENEWAL

Dominant in: Obama (2014), Democratic Platform, Dream Act summary

#### Example from Obama (2014):

"Our history and the facts show that immigrants are a net plus for our economy and our society... Are we a nation that educates the world's best and brightest in our universities, only to send them home to create businesses in countries that compete against us? Or are we a nation that encourages them to stay and create jobs here, create businesses here, create industries right here in America?"

#### Example from Dream Act Summary:

"The bill would provide... protection from deportation and an opportunity to obtain permanent legal status... These individuals... are going to love our country and work hard."

Conceptual Mapping:

- **Source:** ECONOMIC ASSET → **Target:** IMMIGRANTS
  - Resource/asset → Immigrant labor/talent.
  - Investment → Education/legal status.
  - Return → Economic contribution.
  - Depletion → loss of talent (in case of deportation)
  - Renewal → Inclusion based economic growth.

### 4.3. Contrastive Analysis of Ideological Framing

#### 4.3.1. Framing of Immigrants

##### Restrictionist Frame: Threatening Outsiders



- Invasion/war metaphors frame immigrants as hostile forces
- Flood/dumping metaphors present a passive, dehumanized, heavy burden of immigrants.
- The immigrants are framed using fortress metaphors that characterize them as invaders who invade personal space.
- Result: Immigrants are created as issues to be managed or eradicated.

#### **Inclusive Frame: Aspiring Members**

- Journey metaphors position immigrants as people who want to have more excellent lives.
- Family metaphors are used to view immigrants as possible or alienated family members.
- Contribution metaphors portray immigrants as worthy contributors.
- Outcome: The immigrants are made to be thought of as agents, people with humanity and potential worth.

#### **4.3.2. Framing of Policy Solutions**

##### **Restrictionist Solutions: Defense and Exclusion**

- From invasion metaphor → Build walls, deploy military
- From flood metaphor → Contain, divert, stop flow
- From fortress metaphor → Enforce laws, remove intruders
- Policy legitimized: Border security, deportation, strict enforcement

##### **Inclusive Solutions: Pathway and Integration**

- From journey metaphor → Create clear paths, remove obstacles
- From family metaphor → Reunite families, welcome newcomers
- From contribution metaphor → Invest in immigrant potential
- Policy legitimized: Pathway to citizenship, family reunification, Dream Act

#### **4.3.3. Framing of National Identity**

##### **Restrictionist Identity: Sovereign Fortress**

- Nation as a territory to be defended.
- Citizenship as a privilege granted privately.
- American identity as static, in need of defence against change.
- Implied values: Security, sovereignty, order, homogeneity.

##### **Inclusive Identity: Dynamic Family**

- Nation as developing community constructed by immigrants.
- Citizenship as commitment to ideals.
- The American identity as moving, empowered with diversity.
- Implied values: Compassion, opportunity, diversity, renewal.

#### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**



## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the findings reported in Chapter 4 and explains the implications of findings in the context of theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 and research questions formulated in Chapter 1. The discussion elucidates how the metaphorical patterns which are identified as constituting a cognitive-semantic interface position ideological positions in the basis conceptual structures. Subsequently, the limitations of the study are admitted, the perspectives of future research are proposed, and the conclusion is made on the role of metaphor in the discourse of immigration in the U.S.

## 5.2. Discussion of Key Findings

The overall results of the analysis in Chapter 4 were clear and systematic and contributed substantially to proving the main thesis of the study: metaphor is a form of dynamic cognitive-semantic interface upon which abstract political ideologies are brought into being, made emotionally motivated and politically acting.

### 5.2.1. Confirmation of Hypotheses and Theoretical Integration

The findings provide robust confirmation of both research hypotheses, directly validating the proposed cognitive-semantic interface model.

**H1 was confirmed:** Restrictionist discourse was dominated by source domains of CONFLICT (INVASION/WAR), BURDEN/NATURAL DISASTER (FLOOD/DUMPING), and FORTIFICATION (HOUSE/FORTRESS). In stark contrast, inclusive discourse was dominated by source domains of JOURNEY (PATH), FAMILY (HOME/KINSHIP), and CONTRIBUTION/RENEWAL (ECONOMIC ASSET). This bifurcation is not coincidental but systematic, reflecting deep-seated, oppositional ways of conceptualizing the nation, the immigrant, and the relationship between them.

**H2 was confirmed:** These conceptual framing functions were ideological framing functions that were distinct in nature and effect. These restrictionist metaphors repeatedly determined immigrants as external threats and passive burdens, thus making policies of exclusion, defense and removal to be natural and necessary answers to that. The inclusive metaphors, on the other hand, positioned the immigrants as prospective and desirable family members and people, thus making pathway, integration, and investment policies to be naturalized as moral, practical, and useful resolutions. This illustrates that selecting a source domain is always part of the pre-structured problem and it logically implies a restricted range of common-sense answers.

### 5.2.2. Metaphor as a Cognitive-Semantic Interface: Empirical Demonstration



The major theoretical contribution of the study is its empirical establishment of the role of metaphor as the interface between the private cognition and the public ideology. This process was analyzed in three steps:

**Cognitive Activation:** All ideological camps arouse an alternative repertoire of already existing, culturally accessible conceptual mappings (e.g., the conception of a journey or an invasion).

**Semantic Realization:** These cognitive models are represented in concrete, strategically selected linguistic realizations in authoritative discursive forms (e.g., "marching caravans" vs. "path to citizenship").

**Ideological Framing:** Framed metaphors create logical and emotionally evoking narratives, which create social reality in the eyes of the audience, making difficult policy issues understandable and generating support of particular political agendas.

To illustrate, restrictionist speech does not merely describe the migration caravans every time it refers to them as an invasion; it brings the logic of national defense, and the accompanying feelings of alarm and emergency, cognitively into the immigration argument. The process demonstrates that ideology is not simply stated but is cognitively implanted using a figurative language.

### 5.2.3. Incommensurability of Framing and Political Polarization.

One of the most important findings is that the rival systems of metaphors establish incommensurable framings. When one side declares about the necessity to protect the borders against the invasion, and the other talks about the possibility to offer a way to the aspiring families, they are not merely disagreeing in its details of policy they are working on two different conceptual worlds, with different definitions of the main actors (soldiers vs. travelers), the very problem (attack vs. blocked opportunity), and the self-image of the nation (stronghold vs. house). This assists in explaining the extreme polarization and unproductive discussion in the politics of immigration in the United States: the discussion is based on a conflict of metaphorical foundations of the two sides in which one position is absurd or evil to the other.

### 5.3. Limitations of the Study

Although this study is insightful, some limitations have to be mentioned:

1. **Corpus Scope:** The corpus is authoritative and balanced but restricted to ten texts during a specific time (2014-2024). A larger corpus of media speech, judicial decision-making, or citizen analysis would be a better viewpoint.
2. **Analytical Focus:** The research was aimed at defining the prevailing conceptual metaphors and their framing role. It failed to numerically assess



the occurrence or persuasive strength of these metaphors upon the general opinion, which may be the target of experimental or corpus-linguistic follow-up investigations.

3. **Contextual Nuance:** The discussion focused more on the opposition of two ideological extremes. It can thus be inaccurate at reflecting hybrid or shifting metaphorical framing applied either by moderate voices or in a bipartisan proposal.
4. **Researcher Interpretation:** Since this is a qualitative and interpretative study, the researcher has to interpret the results through his or her theoretical prism. Although an appropriate level of reliability was ensured by adhering to the procedure, there are other possible readings of certain metaphorical phrases.

#### 5.4. Future Research Suggestions.

The results and the shortcomings of this study indicate that there are some fruitful paths to be followed in the future:

1. **Diachronic Analysis:** A research which could investigate how the cognitive frame changes with historical and political change: A study that traces the development of immigration metaphors over the decades (e.g. since the Ellis Island narratives to post-9/11 securitization) would shed light on this evolution.
2. **Reception Studies:** A study might examine the ways that a variety of audiences (via political affiliation, immigrant background etc) perceive and are convinced by competing immigration metaphors.
3. **Cross-Cultural Comparison:** A comparative approach to immigration in the U.S. discourse and those of other immigrant-receiving countries (ex: Canada, Germany) might help to reveal cultural peculiarities of conceptualization.
4. **Multimodal Analysis:** A continuation of the analysis to visual metaphors in political cartoons, campaign advertisements, or news diagrams would provide a deeper insight into the way the issue of immigration is represented by different means of semiotics.

#### 5.5. Conclusion

This paper aimed at exploring the metaphor as a cognitive-semantic interface in the polarized field of U.S. immigration discourse. It has shown that rival political ideologies are essentially based on rival systems of conceptual metaphor, through a systematic analysis of texts which represent restrictionist and inclusive views.

The restrictionist paradigm is a paradigm that is organized by metaphors of invasion, flood, and fortress to cognitively shape immigration as an emergency of security and sovereignty, which requires a solution of response through control and exclusion. The inclusive paradigm is designed in terms of metaphors of journey, family and contribution and cogitatively forms the immigration as a



narrative of longing and renewal, which requires a response of pathway and integration. These are not merely varying policy preferences but they are ways of perceiving the world differently.

Hypothetically, the study confirms and expounds the model of metaphor as the active location where profound mental formations become mobilized to particular ideological labor in civic talk. It connects the inmost architecture of thought and the outer act of politics.

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