



The Persuasive Power of Political Metaphors

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THE PERSUASIVE POWER OF POLITICAL METAPHORS

Political discourse is saturated with messages that use metaphors to frame important issues. Do people interpret these messages as mere figures of speech, or does exposure to metaphors influence how people think and feel about the target issues? Researchers have addressed this question from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that metaphor is a cognitive mechanism people use to understand (not just talk about) abstract concepts in terms of dissimilar, more concrete concepts. Supporting this claim, an emerging body of research shows that exposure to metaphoric framings brings observers' attitudes toward target issues in line with their knowledge of the messages' concrete concepts. This chapter reviews this work and discusses its implications for theory and practice.

METAPHOR IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Imagine reading in a newspaper article that the U.S. economy is "struggling against stiff headwinds" but it has not yet "fallen off a cliff" (Mutikani, 2011). You will most likely interpret these phrases effortlessly despite the fact that they do not make sense in literal terms: The economy does not literally struggle against headwinds, like a sailboat, nor can it fall off a cliff. This is an example of a *metaphoric framing*: a message that compares an abstract concept to a superficially unrelated concept that is relatively more concrete and easier to grasp.

Metaphoric framings pervade political discourse. They are commonly used in magazine editorials, political speeches, and other outlets to communicate about such controversial issues as terrorism (Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Victoroff, 2007), immigration (O'Brien, 2003), and war (Lakoff, 1991; see also Chapters 7 and 11, this volume). To mention just a few examples, leaders such as Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, and Barack Obama have attempted to rally civic action by describing a physical journey toward a state of the nation as egalitarian, prosperous, or victorious over evil (Charteris-Black, 2011); Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke compared the central bank's efforts to keep its controversial stimulus program from failing to vehicle operation: "If the ... economy is able to sustain a reasonable cruising speed, we will ease the pressure on the accelerator by gradually reducing the pace of purchases" (Hargreaves, 2013); and Al Gore compared reliance on non-renewable energy sources to a drug addiction: "Junkies find veins in their toes when their arms and legs go out. We are now at a point where we are going after dangerous and dirty fuels" (Sheppard, 2013). Metaphoric framings are also expressed through images. For example, political cartoons often represent the economy (among many other abstract concepts) metaphorically by portraying it as though it were a car that the government drives, an untamed beast, or a baby that requires supervision to avoid getting into trouble.

These observations raise the question: Are metaphoric framings interpreted by observers merely as colorful clichés and visual tropes, or do they influence how observers understand and evaluate the issues? Conceptual metaphor theory suggests a provocative answer to this question (for an introductory overview to the theory, see Kövecses, 2010). It posits that exposure to a metaphoric framing can activate a systematic mapping between the target issue and the concrete concept to which it is compared. This can prompt observers to transfer their knowledge of the concrete concept to interpret the issue, despite the fact that these concepts are superficially unrelated to each other. The next section elaborates on this perspective.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

Metaphor is commonly known as a figure of speech through which one thing is described in terms of another. When Romeo says "Juliet is the sun," he cannot *really* mean that she is an enormous combusting sphere. Most of us are taught in grade school that metaphor is a colorful, but essentially useless, embellishment to normal or so-called proper language, and that it is the special province of poets and other literary elites. But that is incorrect. English speakers utter about one metaphor for every 10 to 25 words, or about six metaphors a minute (Geary, 2011).

But does metaphor's ubiquity in language tell us anything about how people think? Although some theorists claim that metaphoric expressions do not convey any meaningful insight into how people think (McGlone, 2007; Pinker, 2007), others contend that people communicate using metaphor because they



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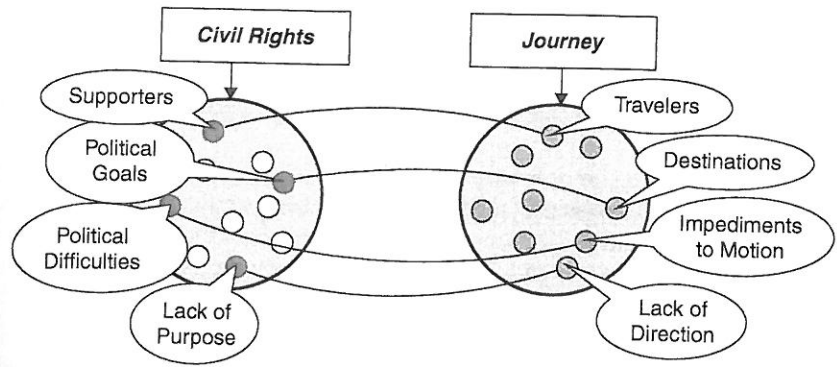


Figure 8.1 Graphical depiction of the conceptual mapping created by the metaphor *civil rights is a journey*.

think using metaphor. This notion was made popular by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and has increasingly informed research in social psychology over the past decade.

Conceptual metaphor theory posits that a metaphor consists of a “target” concept that is understood in terms of a dissimilar “source” concept. Target concepts are complex or abstract, referring to entities, outcomes, and causal relations that cannot be observed with the senses. Source concepts are relatively more concrete and familiar. In many cases they represent familiar sensorimotor experiences such as losing one’s balance, firmly grasping objects, moving toward destinations, and avoiding physical filth. (In this respect, conceptual metaphor theory shares with contemporary theories of embodied cognition [e.g., Barsalou, 2008] the broad notion that the meanings people give to abstract concepts are intimately connected with their bodily states and recurring interactions with their physical environment.) In other cases source concepts represent stereotyped cultural knowledge (e.g., how buildings are constructed; how computers work; the rules of chess) that is not derived primarily from bodily experience.

What does it mean to think about a target in terms of a source? Here we come to the key theoretical insight: Metaphor creates a conceptual mapping, defined as a set of systematic associations between features of the target and analogous features of the source. In this way, metaphor use allows people to draw on their knowledge of the source as a framework for conceptualizing the target. To illustrate, consider the metaphor *civil rights is a journey*, which featured prominently in Martin Luther King’s political speeches (Charteris-Black, 2011). Figure 8.1 depicts how this metaphor might map analogous features of the two concepts. Hence, a person using this metaphor can access her knowledge of journeys to inform how she thinks and feels about civil rights. For example, she can represent the civil rights “movement” as having a *starting point* (predecessors’ pioneering efforts) and an intended *destination* (an egalitarian society), and as *stalling* or *moving* in the wrong *direction* (failed civil

political discourse. They are commonly used in speeches, and other outlets to communicate errorism (Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Ben, 2003), and war (Lakoff, 1991; see also mention just a few examples, leaders such as Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama have attempted to frame a political journey toward a state of the nation as a battle over evil (Charteris-Black, 2011); Federal Reserve the central bank’s efforts to keep its economy from failing to vehicle operation: “If the ... economy is like cruising speed, we will ease the pressure by increasing the pace of purchases” (Hargreaves, 2008). Reference on non-renewable energy sources to a political journey in their toes when their arms and legs go numb. “We are going after dangerous and dirty fuels” and “oil spills” are also expressed through images. For example, the economy (among many other things) is often portrayed as though it were a car that is a wild beast, or a baby that requires supervision to

question: Are metaphoric framings interpreted as rhetorical devices and visual tropes, or do they influence how we evaluate the issues? Conceptual metaphor theory addresses this question (for an introductory overview see Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). It posits that exposure to a metaphoric framing creates a conceptual mapping between the target issue and the concrete source concept. This can prompt observers to transfer their knowledge of the source to interpret the issue, despite the fact that the two concepts are unrelated to each other. The next section elaborates on this theory.

METAPHOR THEORY

A figure of speech through which one thing is compared to another. When Romeo says “Juliet is the sun,” he cannot see her as a burning, combusting sphere. Most of us are taught to use metaphors as colorful, but essentially useless, embellishments in language, and that it is the special province of poets to use them. But that is incorrect. English speakers utter about 25 words, or about six metaphors a minute in conversation.

Research in language tell us anything about how people think? We aim that metaphoric expressions do not control how people think (McGlone, 2007; Pinker, 2007). We communicate using metaphor because they

rights legislation). Conceptual mappings may also guide behavior. For example, people generally know that a person on a journey usually has to pass over difficult terrain to reach a destination. Understanding civil rights as a journey may therefore prepare people to endure hardships as *steps* necessary to *reach* their political goals.

In short, the transfer of knowledge across a metaphor's mapping highlights (makes salient) some aspects of the target and conceals or diverts attention away from other target features. An important consequence is that mapping a given target onto one source will highlight and downplay some pieces of information, whereas mapping that target onto another source, or thinking about it without metaphor, will support a different interpretation. To illustrate, understanding a slum community in terms of a "diseased" area may transfer knowledge that diseased tissue must be either treated or excised, implying that the correct response is to destroy the slums and replace them with different residential neighborhoods. In contrast, conceiving of slums as withering plants may downplay that destructive response and even promote efforts to help the community "grow" and "blossom" (Schön, 1993).

Emerging lines of research in social psychology provide evidence that metaphor use significantly influences how people understand and process a wide range of abstract social concepts, including sociopolitical issues (Landau, Meier, & Keefer, 2010; Landau, Robinson, & Meier, 2014; see also Chapters 2, 7, and 11, this volume). Although relevant studies have utilized a number of empirical paradigms, we focus in this chapter on studies examining the effects of temporary exposure to metaphoric framing.

EXPOSURE TO METAPHORIC FRAMING INFLUENCES POLITICAL ATTITUDES

How can we test conceptual metaphor theory's claim that metaphor shapes thought by systematically mapping analogous features of a target and a source? Some researchers have reasoned that if exposure to a metaphoric framing activates a metaphor at a conceptual level, it should trigger a cascade of associations entailed by that metaphor's mapping. This should lead people to transfer their knowledge of the source to interpret analogous features of the target – even those which are not explicit in the original message.

An example will help to illustrate this reasoning. Imagine that people hear on TV that a military battle in Afghanistan "upped the ante." By comparing the conflict to an element of games that require bets, such as poker, this metaphoric framing may activate related associations between the concepts *war* and *games*. In this way, the message can subtly guide observers to bring their target attitudes in line with their knowledge of the source. For instance, since people generally know that in games the party with the most points wins, they may infer that the United States' invasion of Afghanistan was successful insofar as the U.S. military accrued more "points" – that is, enemy casualties – than the Taliban resistance, even though the original message did not explicitly describe

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social psychology provide evidence that metaphors help people understand and process a wide range of sociopolitical issues (Landau, Meier, & Meier, 2014; see also Chapters 2, 7, and 8). Many studies have utilized a number of empirical methods, including experimental studies examining the effects of temporal

METAPHORIC FRAMING OF POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Metaphor theory's claim that metaphor shapes attitudes is based on the idea that if exposure to a metaphoric framing activates a particular concept, it should trigger a cascade of associations that lead to a particular attitude. This should lead people to transfer their knowledge of the source to the target – even if the source and target are not originally associated.

Consider this reasoning. Imagine that people hear a news report about Afghanistan "upped the ante." By comparing the situation to a game that requires bets, such as poker, this metaphoric framing may activate associations between the concepts *war* and *gambling*. These associations may subtly guide observers to bring their target attitudes in line with the edge of the source. For instance, since people know that the party with the most points wins, they may believe that the mission of Afghanistan was successful insofar as it resulted in more "points" – that is, enemy casualties – than the original message did not explicitly describe

what constitutes a successful military operation (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006; Lakoff, 1991). If the TV message had framed the battle in terms of another source, such as a *chapter in a story*, or described it without using metaphor, the home audience may be less likely to gauge military success in simple quantifiable terms.

Supporting this reasoning, studies show that even brief exposure to a metaphoric framing can prompt people to bring their target attitudes in line with their knowledge of the source to which it is compared. In one such study, Morris and colleagues (2007) asked participants to read stock market commentaries that framed a price trend in terms of either the deliberate action of a living agent (e.g., "the NASDAQ started *climbing* upward") or as the activity of an inanimate object (e.g., "the NASDAQ was *swept* upward"). Next, participants predicted what would happen to the price trend the next day. Morris et al. reasoned that because people generally know that living things move with intention toward destinations, the agent-metaphoric framing would lead people to transfer that knowledge to think about the stock market, inferring that the price trend would continue along its current trajectory the following day. In contrast, an object-metaphoric framing would not support that inference because people generally know that inanimate objects do not move with intention. This is exactly what they found.

On the basis of conceptual metaphor theory we would expect metaphor to influence not only inferences but problem solving as well. People often recognize dissatisfactory states of affairs and want to change or improve them, but they may not clearly see how that gap can be bridged. Metaphor may enable them to map an abstract problem onto a superficially unrelated problem that is relatively more concrete and familiar. This reasoning leads us to predict that exposure to a metaphoric framing of a target problem will incline observers to generate solutions that are consistent with their knowledge of the metaphor's source.

A series of studies by Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) supports this hypothesis. They asked participants to think about a city plagued with crime. For some participants, crime was framed as a "beast" that was "preying upon" the innocent citizens of the town, whereas for other participants it was described as a "disease" that "plagued" the town. Framing crime as a wild animal prompted participants to generate solutions based on increased enforcement (e.g., calling in the National Guard; imposing harsher penalties). In contrast, the virus-metaphoric framing led participants to generate solutions that were diagnostic and reform-oriented (e.g., finding the root cause of the crime wave; improving the economy). In other words, participants generated solutions to the crime problem that were consistent with what they presumably knew about the source concepts: If crime is a beast, it must be "fought," whereas if it is a disease, it must be "treated." These differences in solution generation are unlikely to be due to simple priming effects: One study in the series showed that merely priming the concepts "beast" or "virus" did not affect crime-reduction strategies; only when these concepts framed the target problem did they have the predicted effect.

EXAMINING MECHANISM: STRONGER EVIDENCE FOR METAPHORIC TRANSFER

The studies just reviewed show that even subtle exposure to a metaphoric framing leads observers to think about a sociopolitical issue in terms of unrelated or even irrelevant source concepts. Taken as a whole, this work suggests that widespread metaphoric framings have powerful but largely unrecognized consequences for political attitudes (see also Chapter 11, this volume).

Still, some of these findings may lead us to wonder: Does metaphoric framing exposure cause observers to transfer their source knowledge to interpret the target issue, as conceptual metaphor theory suggests, or does it simply lead them to associate the target with a positively (or negatively) valenced source? Put more simply, is metaphoric framing exposure simply a form of semantic or affective priming, whereby observers assimilate global connotations of the source into their interpretation of the target? Responding to this question has inspired us to develop empirical strategies that allow for more precise tests of metaphor's unique influence on attitudes, as distinct from related mechanisms such as priming and fluency.

Measure source knowledge. Rather than assume invariant source knowledge on the part of observers, we can measure individual differences in that knowledge. This allows us to predict that, following metaphoric framing exposure, differences in observers' source knowledge will predict analogous differences in their target attitudes.

In a study testing this reasoning, we (Landau, Keefer, & Rothschild, 2014) examined a conventional metaphor comparing system failure to a vehicle accident, which is reflected in common expressions such as "the economy is *veering off course*" and "student senate is *headed for a ditch*." Vehicle accidents, we assumed at first, are generally understood to be the fault of the vehicle's driver. We predicted that exposure to a metaphoric framing comparing a system failure to a vehicle accident would support the judgment that, just as drivers often bear considerable responsibility for vehicle accidents, blame for the system failure lies primarily with the highest-ranking individual in charge of that system – that is, the person in the "driver's seat." If individuals are making systematic mappings between the concepts, this effect should occur even if the question of who is to blame for the system failure is *not* explicitly addressed in the original message.

And yet, people differ in how much they blame drivers for vehicle accidents. If metaphoric framing exposure in fact prompts a transfer of source knowledge, then these individual differences should predict blaming of the system's leader. To test this hypothesis, we had all participants read a news story about a vehicle accident and indicate how responsible the vehicle's driver was for causing the accident and the resulting damage. To establish discriminant validity of this predictor, we also measured participants' blaming of a home resident for causing a fire. If metaphoric framing exposure maps a target on a particular source, then it should lead observers to base target attitudes on their knowledge of that

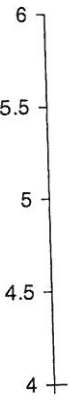


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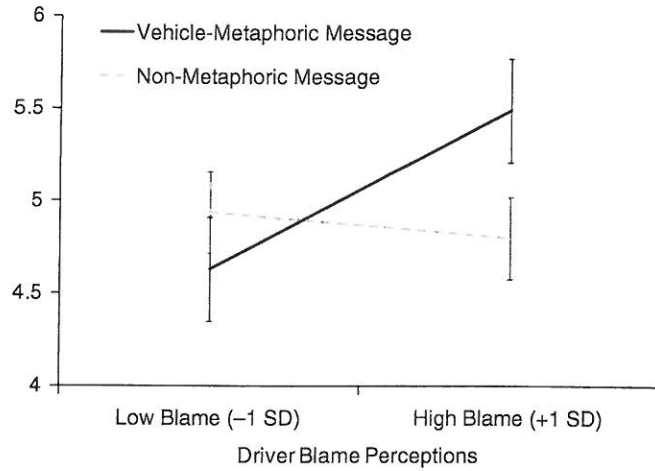


Figure 8.2 Attributions of blame to a company’s CEO for causing the company’s bank-
 ruptcy by framing condition (vehicle-metaphoric vs. non-metaphoric) and prior percep-
 tions of a vehicle driver’s responsibility for causing a vehicle accident.

(Source: Landau, Keefer, & Rothschild, 2014)

source, specifically, but not on related concepts. Hence, although the vehicle
 wreck and fire were both described as unforeseen and destructive accidents,
 we did not expect resident blame perceptions to predict system failure blame
 following a vehicle-metaphoric framing of the target issue.

Participants then read a brief news report on the bankruptcy of a (hypo-
 theoretical) computer software company, labeled Micro-Processing Inc., and the
 resulting unemployment and stockholder losses. Critically, this report contained
 no information about the cause of the company’s failure. Then, half of the partic-
 ipants read “Many people have drawn an analogy between the bankruptcy of
 Micro-Processing Inc. and an automobile accident.” The other participants
 read “Many people have described the bankruptcy of Micro-Processing Inc. as
 a negative event that had an array of harmful consequences.”

Finally, participants indicated how much they blamed the company’s failure
 on its CEO, its employees, and the conditions of the national economy. The
 results of the analyses of CEO blame ratings are plotted in Figure 8.2 (at one
 standard deviation above and below the centered mean of driver blame per-
 ceptions). As predicted, the degree to which participants blamed a driver for
 a vehicle accident positively predicted how much they blamed the company’s
 CEO, but only after exposure to the vehicle metaphoric framing of the com-
 pany’s failure. Also as predicted, driver blame perceptions were unrelated to
 participants’ willingness to blame the company’s employees or economic condi-
 tions regardless of the framing provided, suggesting that the vehicle metaphor
 highlighted the responsibility of the system’s leader and did not simply increase
 a general tendency to assign blame. Supporting our prediction that the effect

was specific to knowledge of vehicle accidents per se, and not just any accident, we observed no interactive effect of metaphoric framing and individual differences in resident blame perceptions.

It is just as important to note that when the vehicle metaphor was not primed, driver blame perceptions did not predict CEO blame. This shows that when a metaphor is not activated, people do not use source knowledge to interpret a target: Vehicle accidents and a software company going bankrupt remained unrelated events in participants' minds.

Manipulate source knowledge. Another empirical strategy for comparing metaphoric framing and simple priming effects is to manipulate the salience of an evaluatively charged source and then expose only some individuals to a metaphoric framing comparing that source to the target. If metaphoric framing influences attitudes solely by means of affective priming, then juxtaposing an aversive source and a target issue should have a main effect, leading to more negative attitudes toward the target. But if metaphoric framing influences attitudes by activating a mapping that guides observers to think about the target in terms of the source, then priming an aversive source should influence target attitudes only when a salient metaphoric framing compares those concepts.

Landau and colleagues (2009) used this strategy to study immigration attitudes. They based their hypotheses on evidence that anti-immigration rhetoric in the early twentieth century viewed the nation as analogous to a physical body that is vulnerable to corruption by invading external entities (O'Brien, 2003). Do people occasionally transfer their concern with protecting their *own* bodies from contamination to negatively judge immigrants entering into their country?

To find out, Landau et al. manipulated contamination threat by priming participants to view airborne bacteria in their environment as either harmful to their physical health or innocuous. Participants – all American citizens – then read an ostensibly unrelated essay describing the United States. In the metaphoric framing condition, the essay contained statements subtly comparing the U.S. to a body (e.g., the “The U.S. experienced a *growth spurt*”); in the non-metaphoric framing condition, those statements were replaced with literal paraphrases (“The U.S. experienced a *period of innovation*”).

As predicted, heightening participants' concerns with bodily contamination increased aversion to immigration if they were additionally primed to think of their country as a physical body. In contrast, the mere salience of contamination threat, although globally negative, did not influence immigration attitudes when the nation was framed without a metaphor. For those participants in the non-metaphoric framing condition, there was no meaningful relation between protecting their own body from foreign elements and the abstract issue of immigration. But when a salient bodily metaphoric framing led participants to map those concepts, they transferred aversive feelings about bodily contamination to harshly judge immigration into their country. This finding provides evidence

that metaphoric framing between source and target affect

Moderation used to test whether metaphoric framing moderates the effect of metaphoric framing on target issue.

What are the effects of metaphoric framing on target issue? They find other effects as though they are metaphoric framing. They interpret that issue well, they will have their attitudes. They find metaphoric framing associations, v

To test the effects of metaphoric framing on people's subjective causes of corruption, we assessed their knowledge of this quiz was only the most common (e.g., “In the laid off how r sure/Uncertain simple (e.g., rates generally

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that when the vehicle metaphor was used did not predict CEO blame. This shows that, people do not use source knowledge to interpret and a software company going bankrupt in participants' minds.

Another empirical strategy for comparing priming effects is to manipulate the salience and then expose only some individuals to that source to the target. If metaphoric framing by means of affective priming, then juxtaposition of the source and target should have a main effect, leading to a preference for the target. But if metaphoric framing influences attitudes toward the target, then priming that guides observers to think about the target should have a main effect, leading to a preference for the target. But if metaphoric framing influences attitudes toward the target, then priming an aversive source should have a main effect, leading to a preference for the target. But if metaphoric framing influences attitudes toward the target, then priming a salient metaphoric framing compares

used this strategy to study immigration attitudes on evidence that anti-immigration rhetoric viewed the nation as analogous to a physical invasion by invading external entities (O'Brien, 2004). For their concern with protecting their own country, they tend to negatively judge immigrants entering into their

manipulated contamination threat by priming the source of contamination in their environment as either harmful to health or beneficial. Participants – all American citizens – then described the United States. In the metaphoric condition, statements subtly comparing the source and target (“The country experienced a *growth spurt*”); in the non-metaphoric condition, statements were replaced with literal parallel statements (“The country experienced a *period of innovation*”).

Participants' concerns with bodily contamination were manipulated if they were additionally primed to think of the source as either harmful or beneficial. In contrast, the mere salience of contamination did not influence immigration attitudes without a metaphor. For those participants in the metaphoric condition, there was no meaningful relation between the source and target. In contrast, metaphoric framing led participants to map their aversive feelings about bodily contamination onto their country. This finding provides evidence

that metaphoric framing effects are mediated by a systematic conceptual mapping between the source and the target, and not by a simple spillover of negative affect from one concept to another.

Moderation by target uncertainty. A third empirical strategy that can be used to test whether metaphoric framing effects are due specifically to metaphor use, and not related mechanisms, is to test whether these effects emerge particularly under the conditions when people rely on metaphor to interpret a target issue.

What are those conditions? According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor use satisfies people's motivation to gain a confident grasp of a concept that they find otherwise abstract and uncertain. This suggests that when people feel as though they lack a confident grasp of a target issue, and they encounter a metaphoric framing, they should hungrily draw on their source knowledge to interpret that issue. If, however, they feel as though they understand the target issue well, they will not rely on an accessible metaphor and therefore will not bring their attitudes toward that issue in line with their source knowledge. If metaphoric framing effects were simply due to priming simple semantic or affective associations, we would not expect them to be moderated by target uncertainty.

To test this prediction, we (Landau et al., 2014) first had to manipulate people's subjective sense that they understood the target issue, in this case the causes of corporate bankruptcy. We had participants take a quiz purported to assess their knowledge of corporate bankruptcy. For half of our participants, this quiz was designed to induce feelings of uncertainty by asking questions that only the most knowledgeable bankruptcy lawyers or economists would know (e.g., “In the first five months of 2012, large corporations filing for bankruptcy laid off how many employees? a. 20,170; b. 32,500; c. 48,922; d. 65,003; e. Not sure/Uncertain”); for the other participants, this quiz was designed to be very simple (e.g., “When large corporations go bankrupt, national unemployment rates generally: a. increase; b. decrease; c. stay the same”).

Then, using the procedure discussed earlier, participants read about the bankruptcy of Micro-Processing Inc. and were randomly assigned to read a statement comparing that bankruptcy to a vehicle accident or describing it without metaphor. Finally, we asked them how much the company's CEO is to blame for its bankruptcy – that is, how much they blame the individual in control of the system. We observed the predicted interaction on leader blame scores. As illustrated in Figure 8.3, participants who read the vehicle-metaphoric framing (vs. non-metaphoric framing) of the company's bankruptcy were more likely to hold its CEO responsible, but this effect occurred only for participants previously primed to feel uncertain about the nature of corporate bankruptcy. In contrast, participants who took the easy quiz felt more confident in their knowledge of bankruptcy, and thus did not rely on the vehicle metaphor to interpret who was to blame for the company's failure.

Another possibility is that metaphors influence attitudes in favor of certain interpretations merely because they make information about the target more

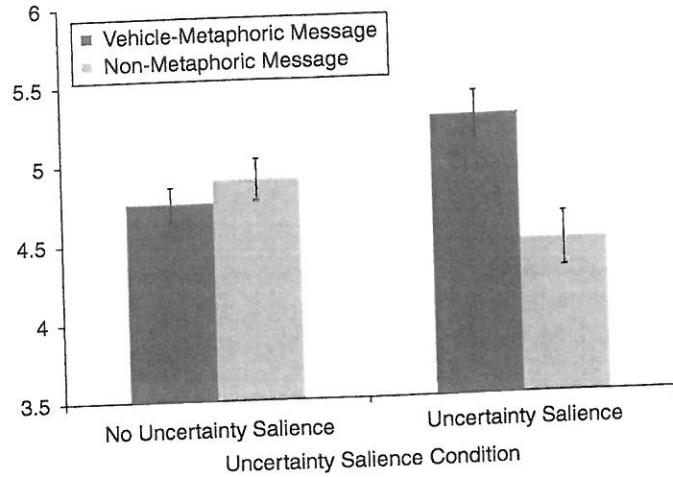


Figure 8.3 Attributions of blame to a company's CEO for causing the company's bankruptcy by framing condition and the salience of uncertainty surrounding corporate bankruptcy.

(Source: Landau, Keefer, & Rothschild, 2014)

fluent – that is, easier to process. Because more fluent stimuli elicit positive affect (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), it is possible that positive affect serves as a peripheral cue through which metaphoric messages are persuasive (and not metaphoric mapping per se).

In contrast to this fluency alternative, we have found that the degree to which metaphor use helps people to grasp an abstract concept, an indication of conceptual mapping, predicts how much they bring their attitudes in line with that metaphor. In one study, participants read an article arguing for the importance of balancing the federal budget. In one condition, the article contained expressions that compared the federal budget to a household budget (e.g., "We're all familiar with paychecks, bills, and other parts of a household budget, and we can understand the federal budget using the same ideas"). In the other condition, the same essential statements were made without using metaphor.

Next participants rated how much the article they read helped them to gain a clear understanding of the federal budget. Finally, they were asked how much they support cuts to various federal programs, including the Department of Education and Social Security. We reasoned that participants exposed to the metaphoric framing would transfer knowledge that, in a well-operating household, families try to live within their means. As a result, they would be more in favor of cutting spending than those who read the non-metaphoric article. This is exactly what we found. More importantly, though, the effect of the metaphoric article on attitudes was due specifically to its

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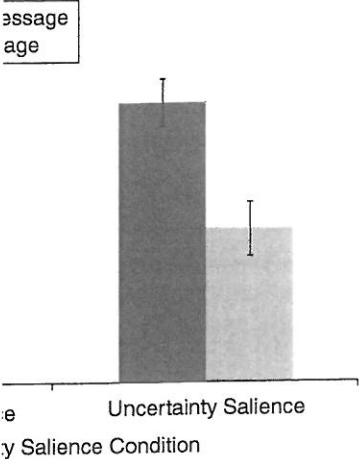
perceived epistemic benefit: The more participants felt the article helped them understand the budget, the more they aligned their attitudes toward the implications of that metaphor. Even though all participants who saw the article likely found it easier to process than an alternative, non-metaphoric description, the mediating role of epistemic benefit supports the view that metaphoric mapping specifically influenced participants' attitudes toward the federal budget.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The lines of research just reviewed shed a new light on the cognitive mechanisms underlying political attitudes. Mainstream perspectives in attitude theory assume that people base their attitudes toward a social stimulus on knowledge structures that have a relatively obvious bearing on that stimulus (Greenwald, Brock, & Ostrom, 1968). People's attitudes toward *crime*, for example, are assumed to be based merely on accumulated knowledge about crime. Despite its intuitive appeal and ample empirical support, this account may be incomplete. Metaphor research supplements it by showing that, as people attempt to form attitudes about abstract sociopolitical issues, they sometimes rely on metaphor to conceptualize them in terms of *different types* of stimuli which are easier to grasp. *Crime* and *aggressive animals*, for example, share few similarities at a surface level, yet knowledge of aggressive animals offers a mental scaffold for interpreting analogous, but more nebulous, aspects of crime.

Although metaphor is pervasive in political discourse, it is not the only rhetorical strategy used in political communication to arouse audience interest or change people's hearts and minds. Other strategies include narratives, anecdotes, rhetorical questions, Biblical or literary allusions, and modes of discourse such as irony and sarcasm. We have isolated metaphor for the purpose of studying its persuasive impact, but future research should examine the interplay between metaphor and other rhetorical strategies.

According to Charteris-Black (2011), using various strategies in combination is especially persuasive because it conceals the contribution of any single strategy, and thus avoids alerting the audience's reactance to being manipulated or exploited. For example, systems of metaphors can be integrated into overarching narratives to enhance persuasive impact. Charteris-Black gives the example of Winston Churchill's World War II public addresses, which interwove metaphors and narrative to dramatically portray the United Kingdom and its allies as locked in a mythic battle of Good and Evil – a narrative that strengthened national unity and stoked patriotic fervor. Future laboratory research could assess the effectiveness of more complex forms of persuasion by testing whether metaphor is more effective when it acts in combination with other rhetorical strategies rather than in isolation.



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PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As we noted earlier, metaphoric framings are commonly used in political discourse to communicate about issues that affect people's lives, such as the *economy* and *war*. They can be found in campaign slogans, consumer advertisements, news reports, educational materials, and the courtroom. Research is beginning to show that these messages are more than colorful figures of speech; instead, they lead people to recruit their knowledge of a source concept to interpret a target issue, even though the two concepts are unrelated at a surface level. This suggests that these widespread messages have powerful but largely unacknowledged consequences for political attitudes. For one, exposure to a metaphoric framing can bias people's attitudes toward abstract issues by leading them to base their attitudes on knowledge of irrelevant yet familiar concrete concepts, without due consideration of the target issue's distinctive features and repercussions. This might lead them to make bad decisions and poor judgments (see also Chapters 7, 10, and 11, this volume).

In addition to changing attitude content, metaphor use may create rigidity in attitudes. This is because metaphor transfers not only bits of knowledge from a concrete concept to an abstract concept; it can also transfer the sheer self-evident nature of one's knowledge about the concrete concept. When people use that concrete knowledge as a framework for making sense of an abstract issue, they may be equally confident that their attitudes toward that issue are correct. To illustrate, it is obviously true that an infant requires constant care to survive and thrive. So what happens when people encounter a message that metaphorically frames the handling of the national economy in terms of infant care (e.g., a claim that we must "nurture" developing businesses)? We've already alluded to the possibility that people will transfer knowledge of infant care to make sense of the economy, perhaps forming the attitude that the economy needs federal oversight to operate properly. Here we are adding a more subtle point: that the attitudes they form about the economy using that metaphor will feel just as obvious, just as self-evident, as their beliefs and attitudes about what infants need to survive. Indeed our ongoing research (reviewed above) finds that metaphors inspire exactly this confidence in understanding.

The practical implication is that interventions designed to reduce bias in attitudes should pay particular attention to the metaphors individuals and groups use to frame discourse (a project already begun; see Kruglanski et al., 2007; Lakoff, 1991, 2004; see also Chapters 2 and 20, this volume). Indeed, some metaphors are so conventional (e.g., due to repeated media exposure) that recipients may not immediately recognize them as metaphors. They may interpret them instead as simply the conventional way of characterizing the issue in question. Thus, perhaps the first step in increasing the public's consciousness of metaphor's persuasive pull would be to educate them on what a metaphor is, and what it is not. For example, at least since U.S. president Richard Nixon declared a "war on drugs" in 1971, discourse surrounding illegal drug regulation, pollution, cancer, and other societal problems has consistently drawn on

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IMPLICATIONS

ings are commonly used in political discourse that affect people's lives, such as the economic campaign slogans, consumer advertisements, and the courtroom. Research is beginning to show that colorful figures of speech; instead, knowledge of a source concept to interpret a concept are unrelated at a surface level. These metaphors have powerful but largely unacknowledged effects. For one, exposure to a metaphorical framing of abstract issues by leading them to irrelevant yet familiar concrete concepts, obscures the issue's distinctive features and repercussions, leading to poor judgments (see also

content, metaphor use may create rigidity in thought; it transfers not only bits of knowledge from one concept to another; it can also transfer the sheer self-evidence of the concrete concept. When people use metaphors to make sense of an abstract issue, their attitudes toward that issue are correct. An infant requires constant care to survive; when people encounter a message that metaphorically frames the economy in terms of infant care (e.g., a "gigging" business), we've already alluded to our knowledge of infant care to make sense of the economy. The attitude that the economy needs federal intervention is adding a more subtle point: that the economy using that metaphor will feel just like our beliefs and attitudes about what infants need. Research (reviewed above) finds that metaphorical framing influences understanding.

at interventions designed to reduce bias in attention to the metaphors individuals and objects already begun; see Kruglanski et al., Chapters 2 and 20, this volume). Indeed, (e.g., due to repeated media exposure) that recognize them as metaphors. They may intervene in a conventional way of characterizing the issue in order to increase the public's consciousness and to educate them on what a metaphor is. At least since U.S. president Richard Nixon's discourse surrounding illegal drug regulation, societal problems has consistently drawn on

elements of military combat. Individuals fed a steady diet of these metaphors may fail to fully appreciate that such messages are, in fact, metaphorical, and may offer a partial or skewed picture of the issue at hand.

Furthermore, awareness of metaphor's effect on political attitudes can offer insight on divisive and seemingly intractable political conflicts. While more liberal groups may see important programs like unemployment and healthcare as a *safety net*, counter messages from conservatives often frame such programs as *hand-outs* (for more examples, see Lakoff, 1996). It does not take much to recognize the very different entailments of these metaphorical understandings: for example, a *safety net* is necessary to prevent serious harm, whereas a *hand-out* is not. By relying on metaphorical understandings with divergent entailments, political parties often become mired in ideological gridlock. A common discourse capable of transcending the simple entailments of a group's chosen metaphor is an important prerequisite for cooperation between competing groups.

The last thing we should do, however, is call for a moratorium on metaphor use. Metaphors can be very helpful for wrapping our heads around complex and abstract concepts. Rather than banning metaphor from public discourse, we need to be alert to when it is being used to reinforce and defend ideologies that we already prefer, and when it is being used to broaden our cognitive horizons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Number BCS-1222047.

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