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### Journey Metaphor: Navigating the U.S. Presidential Campaign Slogans and Voter Perspectives (2000-2024)

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#### Abstract:

This study employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics to investigate the impact of the journey metaphor on U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024. A comprehensive analysis of 20 years of slogans sourced from Wikipedia reveals a nuanced understanding of the metaphor's role in shaping political discourse and voter perceptions. The research identifies three dominant themes: "Vision for the Future" (37.04%), "Challenges and Solutions," and "Identity and Values." Notably, the emphasis on "Unity and Togetherness" has significantly decreased, indicating a shift in political messaging strategies. This study contributes to the existing literature on political discourse and campaign rhetoric, providing insights into the evolution of U.S. presidential campaign slogans and their implications for voter engagement.

#### Keywords:

Emotional Connections, Journey Metaphor, Presidential Campaign Slogans, Political Discourse, Political Messaging, Voter Perceptions

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## 旅程隱喻：美國總統競選口號與選民觀點導航 (2000-2024)

### 摘要：

本研究運用多學科方法，結合批判性語篇分析與認知語言學，探討2000年至2024年間旅程隱喻對美國總統競選口號的影響。對20年來來自 Wikipedia 的競選口號進行的全面分析，揭示了隱喻在塑造政治論述和選民看法中的作用的細微理解。研究確定了三個主導主題：「未來願景」(37.04%)、「挑戰與解決方案」以及「身份與價值觀」。值得注意的是，對「團結一致」的強調明顯減少，顯示出政治訊息傳播策略的轉變。本研究對有關政治論述和競選修辭的現有文獻有所貢獻，為美國總統競選口號的演變及其對選民參與的影響提供了深入的見解。

**關鍵字：** 情感連結、旅程隱喻、總統競選口號、政治論述、政治訊息、選民看法

## 1. Introduction

Recent developments in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have illuminated the connection between language and social practice, particularly through metaphor. This paper examines how metaphors rooted in historical narratives and cultural myths shape U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024, with a specific focus on the prevalent "journey" metaphor and its implications for political discourse and public opinion.

Studying discourse through CDA provides valuable insights into the interplay between language and social actions, demonstrating how language influences social understanding and behavior. Metaphors are crucial linguistic tools that convey complex ideas and evoke emotional responses. They link abstract concepts to tangible experiences, drawing on historical and cultural narratives that have permeated human communication. Fez-Barrington's work highlights the evolution of metaphorical language, from early cave drawings to contemporary usage. Through metaphor, we express not only our thoughts but also our identities, goals, and shared values.

In political communication, metaphors play a significant role, particularly in campaigns. They are not mere embellishments; they are essential to shaping political identities and reflecting voters' hopes and fears.

This study examines metaphorical constructs in U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024, with a particular emphasis on the "journey" metaphor. This metaphor is a common theme in political rhetoric, illustrating the relationship between candidates' narratives and public aspirations.

The aim is to explore the meaning of the journey metaphor in politics as manifested in these slogans, serving as a narrative device for both individual candidate platforms and broader societal identities.

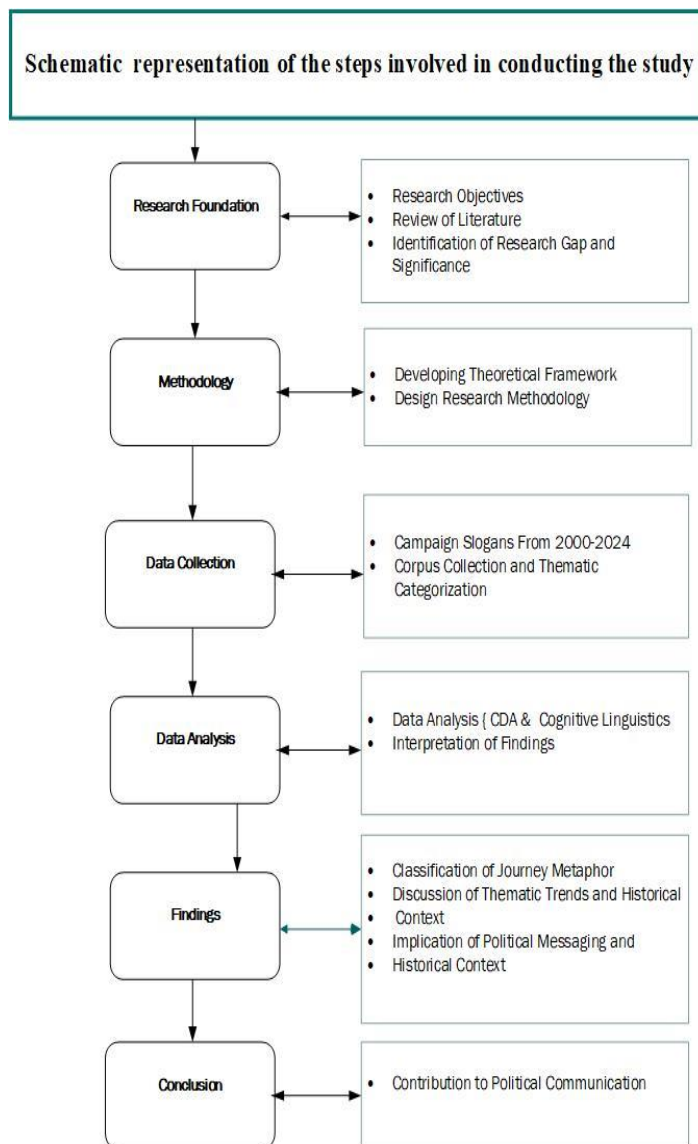


Figure 1. Schematic Representation of the Study

## 2. Literature Review

The journey metaphor serves as a notable analytical lens through which to examine U.S. presidential campaign slogans. Grounded in cognitive linguistics, this metaphor enhances our understanding of how candidates frame their campaigns as collective journeys toward desired outcomes. Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) posits that metaphors are foundational to our conceptual understanding and communication. Their exploration offers a framework for interpreting campaign slogans as calls for voter engagement in a collective pursuit of a brighter future. Charteris-Black (2004) echoes this perspective, showing how metaphors in political discourse shape public perception.

Beyond merely embellishing rhetoric, metaphors act as vital narrative devices that position voters as active participants in realizing their national vision. After examining journey metaphors in political communications, Gula David (2015) highlighted the ability of these metaphors to create a sense of unity. Houghton (2017) emphasized the emotional resonance of these metaphors and highlighted how slogans like "Make America Great Again" invoke feelings of nostalgia and urgency. Furthermore, Tietze et al. (2021) explored the role of metaphors in political framing, capturing the essence of slogans like "A Better America." Through a synthesis of cognitive linguistics, narrative analysis, and discourse studies, scholars effectively decode the meanings and implications of these slogans.

### **Research Gap**

While existing literature examines metaphors in politics, especially in U.S. presidential elections, a gap remains in understanding how the "journey" metaphor specifically affects voter views and political identity from 2000 to 2024. While most studies have concentrated on specific slogans, a comprehensive analysis of how the journey metaphor shapes the overall narrative of political tactics across various election years. A detailed study of the emotional responses evoked by this metaphor and its impact on public opinion and political loyalty is essential.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research enhances the understanding of political communication by emphasizing the journey metaphor's crucial role in shaping campaign strategies, public opinion, and political identities in the United States. By combining cognitive linguistics and emotional response theory, this study reveals how metaphors serve as narrative tools that connect with voters personally. Through a multi-year analysis, the study aims to uncover cognitive and emotional processes that create common ground among voters, thus shedding light on the broader cultural narratives influencing American politics.

### **Objectives**

This analysis contributes to discourse and metaphor studies in political communication by examining how the journey metaphor influences public perception and political loyalty from 2000 to 2024. Through exploring this metaphor, the research seeks to reveal the deeper cognitive and emotional processes involved in political narratives, underscoring the importance of metaphorical frameworks in political engagement.

## 3. Methodology

This study uses a comprehensive collection of presidential campaign slogans from credible sources, primarily Wikipedia, to analyze the expression of journey metaphors. By categorizing slogans thematically, we illustrate how political figures adapt their strategies to governance challenges.

### **3.1 Rationale for selecting research objects**

**Metaphorical Connection:** Slogans clearly relate to the "journey" concept, demonstrating how the beginning point, route, and end are important in inspiring people to participate in civic activities.

**Time frame focus:** This study examines slogans from campaigns between 2000 and 2024 to analyze how political messaging has developed over the previous 20 years.

**Conversation Impact:** We chose slogans based on their capacity to influence political discourse, help voters grasp complicated topics, and affect public opinion.

**Analytical Fit:** By analyzing slogans using critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, we can obtain valuable insights into how the audience responds and thinks, thus improving overall assessment. For example, examining linguistic patterns and hidden meanings can provide valuable insights.

**Diverse Representation:** Including a variety of candidates and elections from the given years helps enrich the study by providing different perspectives and political contexts, as well as broadening the examination of the "journey" metaphor's application and significance.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

The central question guiding this investigation is as follows: "In what ways do journey metaphors in U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024 affect political discourse, voter perceptions, and the construction of candidate identities?"

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Deignan (2008: 282) distinguishes between corpus-driven and corpus-based analyses in corpus linguistics. A corpus-driven analysis relies entirely on the corpus to generate hypotheses, whereas a corpus-based approach tests existing theories against the corpus data. Given

previous research in political discourse, this study employs both corpus-driven and corpus-based analyses, sourcing data from Wikipedia to classify campaign slogans thematically and investigating the journey metaphor's role. Combining thematic content analysis with quantitative techniques, we identify patterns in the application of journey metaphors across electoral cycles.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

We will source the data for this study from credible sites that aggregate U.S. presidential campaign slogans, with a primary focus on Wikipedia. We selected this platform due to its extensive collection of slogans from various political cycles, which allowed us to conduct in-depth research from 2000 to 2024. The chosen slogans are classified according to their thematic substance and their use of travel metaphors to build political narratives.

## 4. Analyzing the Journey and Image Schemata of Election Campaigns

Metaphors are vital tools in political discourse, transforming abstract concepts into tangible experiences. According to Fez-Barrington (2012), metaphors create connections between disparate ideas, enhancing cognitive engagement with political matters. Hurford et al. (2008) argued that metaphors also help translate abstract political concepts into more relatable forms, thus improving comprehension. This study explores the significance of journey metaphors and image schemata in shaping election slogans in the U.S. from 2000 to 2024.

### 4.1 Cognitive Processing and the Journey Metaphor

Cognitive processing is fundamental to comprehending human language and helps establish links between different political concepts, fostering an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in political discourse. This engagement enhances our understanding of political slogans because they connect campaign activities to civic responsibilities and governing principles. Johnson (1987) defined visual schemata as cognitive frameworks that facilitate conceptual understanding and clarify the relationship between voting and political ideals.

The journey metaphor comprises three essential elements:

1. The source represents the origins of political involvement.
2. The path signifies the electoral process.
3. The goal is to encapsulate the objectives of civic participation.

This framework illustrates the progression from concrete voting experiences to aspirational democratic principles, highlighting the role of metaphors in shaping collective electoral understanding.

### 4.2 Analysis of the U.S. Election Slogans (2000-2024)

From 2000 to 2024, image schemata has been integral to developing U.S. election slogans, linking real-life experiences to broader political concepts. These mental frameworks aid voter understanding by connecting actual situations to voters' meanings. Political messaging typically involves the following:

- **Source:** Core values and experiences.
  - **Path:** Transition from current conditions to future goals.
- Goal:** Developing desired outcomes from citizen engagement.

Campaigns often use familiar elements from the source to create clear and effective slogans. Johnson (2008) highlighted how concrete experiences can transform into abstract political thoughts, underscoring the motivations driving political movements.

The journey metaphor serves as a powerful analytical tool for examining election slogans, as metaphors facilitate the comprehension of complex political discussions. Fez-Barrington (2012) suggests that metaphors reveal connections between varying ideas, thereby aiding cognitive processing. Likewise, Hurford et al. (2008) noted that metaphors make abstract political beliefs more relatable, thus providing clarity in the political landscape.

By employing the journey metaphor, we can discern more clearly how personal experiences align with broader electoral ideas. This metaphor not only helps explore political thought but also connects voting actions to the overarching narrative of democracy. Gibbs (1998) highlighted the ubiquity of metaphors in political language, emphasizing their significance in understanding political communication.

### 4.3 Object Event-Structure Metaphor in U.S. Election Campaign Slogans (2000-2024)

This study analyzes event-structure metaphors in U.S. election campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024 and examines how these slogans serve as effective tools for expressing political beliefs, influencing governance, and shaping social hopes. This analysis focuses on journey metaphors to shed light on the connections between language, thinking, and political change.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

### 5.1 Source–target domain relationship

**Table 1. Source Domain and Target Domain Relationships**

Source Domain	Target Domain
Transfer of Ideals	Shift in Governance
Ideals	Vision
Movement of Ideals	Political Change
Transfer of Ideals	Influence on Policy
Desired Outcomes	Societal Goals

The tab. 1 outlines the relationship between source domains (conceptual frameworks) and target domains (political outcomes) in the context of event-structure metaphors within U.S. election campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024. The source domains, such as "Transfer of Ideals" and "Movement of Ideals," represent the conceptual journey of political ideals. In contrast, the target domains illustrate the resulting effects on governance, vision, political change, policy influence, and societal goals. Overall, the table highlights how metaphors related to journeys help connect language with political beliefs and aspirations, emphasizing the role of slogans in shaping public perception and governance.

This analysis explores U.S. election campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024 through the journey metaphor, illustrating how these succinct phrases encapsulate candidates' goals and reflect political trends while influencing public perception (Tabl.2).

The study categorizes slogans into themes ranging from ambitious visions to community solidarity, using a framework that centers on criteria such as vision presentation, issue handling, candidate identification, unity promotion, freedom emphasis, and change advocacy.

This thematic approach reveals the deeper meanings and messages behind campaign slogans across various election cycles and underscores the significance of metaphor in shaping political narratives and mobilizing voter support.

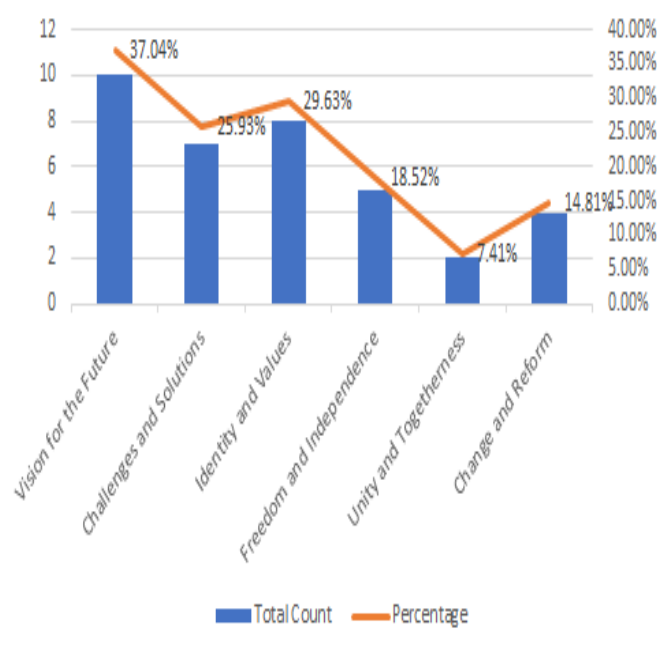
**Table 2. Classification by U.S. Election Campaign Slogans (2000-2024) Using the Journey Theoretical Framework**

Year	Party	Slogan	Journey Category	Journey Implication
2000	Democratic	Leadership for the New Millennium	Vision for the Future	Signify a forward-thinking leadership style focused on progress.
		Prosperity and Progress	Vision for the Future	Indicates an optimistic economic growth trajectory.
	Republican	Compassionate Conservatism	Identity and Values	Provides a caring approach that reflects core conservative principles.
		Reformer with Results	Challenges and Solutions	Highlights commitment to addressing issues with practical outcomes.

2004	Republican	A Safer World and a Hopeful America	Challenges and Solutions	Emphasizing security and optimism in response to challenges.
	Democratic	A Stronger America	Vision for the Future	Conveys a determined journey toward national strength.
		Let us Be America Again	Identity and Values	Calls for a return to foundational American ideals.
		Dean of the United States	Identity and Values	Personalizes the campaign by linking identity to the candidate's story.
Libertarian	Lighting Liberty's fires in One Heart at a time	Freedom and Independence	Encourages individual empowerment and personal liberty.	
2008	Democratic	Yes, we can.	Vision for the Future	Instills a sense of collective hope and action toward change.
		Change We Can Believe In: A Study of	Change and Reform: A Review of the literature	Proclaims commitment to meaningful reform based on trust.
		Hope	Vision for the Future	A positive outlook and the promise of better days are emphasized.
	Republican	Country First	Identity and Values	Promote national pride and a commitment to putting the country first.
	Independent	People Fighting Back	Challenges and Solutions	Frames the campaign as a response to adversity and a fight for human rights.
	Libertarian	Liberty for America	Freedom and Independence	Underlines the party's foundation on individual liberty.
2012	Democratic	Forward	Change and Reform: A Review of the literature	Represents the journey toward progress and innovation.
	Republican	Believe in America	Identity and Values	Reinforce national identity and values in the political discourse.
		Restore Our Futures	Challenges and Solutions	Indicates a remedial journey that targets national recovery.

2016	Libertarian	The People's President	Identity and Values	Connects candidate identity directly with the electorate.
	Republican	Make America Great Again!	Vision for the Future	Evokes a journey of national resurgence and pride.
	Democratic	I'm With Her	Unity and Togetherness	Promotes collective identity and support for a cause.
		Love for Trump's Hate	Unity and Togetherness	Encourages unity against division through love and solidarity.
	Libertarian	Live Free	Freedom and Independence	Encourages individual freedom as a core value of the campaign.
2020	Democratic	Build Back Better	Change and Reform: A Review of the literature	Signals a journey of recovery and improvement after crisis.
	Republican	Keep America Great	Vision for the Future	Provides continuity and sustained progress.
	Libertarian	Real change for real people	Change and Reform: A Review of the literature	Promise authentic reforms that resonate with citizens.
	Green Party	For Our Future	Vision for the Future	This implies a commitment to sustainability and future considerations.
2024	Democratic	Let's Finish the Job	Challenges and Solutions	Indicates an ongoing journey toward fulfilling promises and goals.
	Republican	Make America Great Again!	Vision for the Future	Repeats previous themes of national pride and Improvement.
	Libertarian	Chase-ing Freedom	Freedom and Independence	Involves the pursuit of personal liberties and calls for action.
	Independent	Declare Independence	Freedom and Independence	Urges citizens to embrace their autonomy and their right to choose.

employed by politicians throughout their campaigns. The fig. 2 summarizes the percentage representation of each journey category



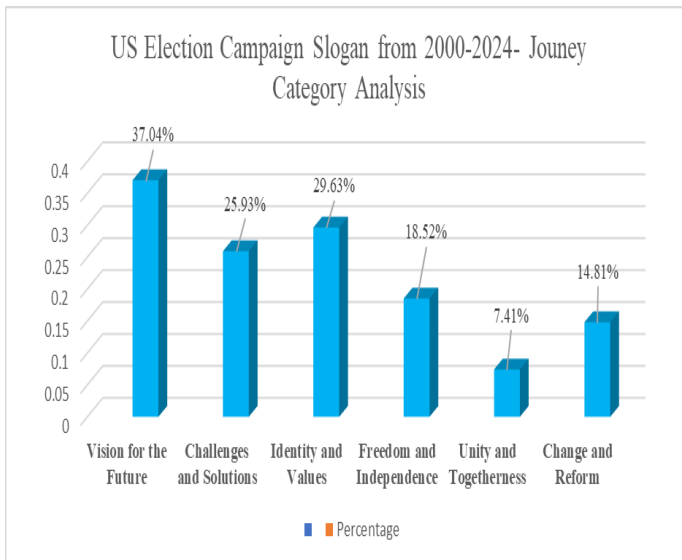
**Figure 2. Summary of Journey Category percentages (2000-2024)**

### 5.3 The Role of Journey Metaphors in U.S. Election Campaign Slogans (2000-2024)

The analysis of U.S. election campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024 reveals that these slogans heavily employ journey metaphors to express political objectives and create emotional resonance with voters. This linguistic strategy not only reflects but also shapes public perceptions of national identity and aspirations, effectively guiding the discourse on political engagement. A key theme emerging from the slogans is the "Vision for the Future," which constitutes 37.04% of the examined slogans, highlighting candidates' emphasis on prospective strategies. Although the theme of "Unity and Togetherness" remains significant, its prominence has waned in recent campaigns. This study categorizes the various communication strategies employed by political campaigns, reflecting the evolving socio-political landscape of each election cycle. Through the application of Journey Theory, the analysis underscores critical dimensions such as vision, identity, challenges, and the quest for change. Ultimately, these findings illustrate that U.S. election slogans serve as a powerful tool for articulating candidates' viewpoints while also influencing voters' collective understanding of their journey toward the future of democracy.

### 5.2 Summary of Journey Category Percentages (2000-2024)

The categorization of slogans using the Journey Theory reveals diverse themes, messages, and techniques



**Figure 3. An Illustration of the US Election Campaign Slogan (2000-2024) Journey Category Analysis**

## 6. Analysis of Electoral Narratives: Themes and Trends in U.S. Election Slogans (2000-2024)

### 6.1 Vision for the Future: An Optimistic Trek

The Vision for the Future category comprises 37.04% of the slogans, highlighting candidates' inclination to present aspirational narratives. Slogans like "Leadership for the New Millennium" and "Yes We Can" symbolize hope and potential, assuring voters of a better tomorrow and portraying candidates as progress agents. From a Journey Theory perspective, candidates position themselves as navigators leading constituents toward an ideal future, aligning with Tönnies' concepts of "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft," where shared aspirations are vital for improving social conditions. The emphasis on collective optimism reflects a recognized need for unity amid a changing sociopolitical climate.

### 6.2 Challenges and Solutions: The Path through Adversity

This category, comprising 25.93% of slogans, frames the electoral journey in terms of obstacles and resolutions. Slogans such as "Change We Can Believe In" and "Build Back Better" acknowledge difficulties while offering viable paths forward. Within this narrative, electoral journeys emphasize experiences and transformations, highlighting candidates' readiness to confront adversity and embed resilience into their political platforms as roadmaps to recovery.

### 6.3 Identity and Values: Defining the Collective Journey

With 29.63% representation, Identity and Values slogans highlight the significance of collective and individual identity—examples like "Compassionate

Conservatism" and "Believe in America" foster a connection with voters based on deeply held beliefs. Using journey metaphors, candidates invite voters to share a path defined by intrinsic values, evoking feelings of belonging during uncertain times.

### 6.4 Freedom and Independence: Navigating Autonomy

Meaningfully, the category of freedom and independence, at 18.52%, celebrates autonomy and personal liberty. Slogans like "Live Free" and "Declare Your Independence" resonate with foundational American ideals of individuality and self-determination, encouraging voters to envision their roles in a society that values freedom. This indicates candidates' commitment to these principles while urging voters to actively participate in maintaining these liberties.

### 6.5 Unity and Togetherness: Collective Pilgrimage

Only 7.41% of slogans emphasized unity and togetherness, suggesting a diminished focus on collective action compared to the other categories. Notable slogans like "Love Trumps Hate" indicate that while calls for unity exist, they occupy a minor role in political narratives, questioning unity's perceived efficacy in current polarized environments.

### 6.6 Change and Reform: Call for Transformation

Slogans in the Change and Reform category account for 14.81% of the total, encapsulating the notion of transformational journeys. Examples like "Build Back Better" and "Real change for real people" exemplify candidates' intentions to guide voters toward a renewed social and political order, framing reform as crucial to the narrative of progress.

The analysis of U.S. election slogans from 2000 to 2024 through Journey Theory reveals distinct thematic categories reflective of candidates' strategies to engage voters. The predominant emphasis on visions for the future denotes a collective yearning for hope and progress, while challenges and values highlight the political journey's complexities. Despite unity's reduced importance, the focus on freedom, individuality, and transformative change remains central to electoral narratives, profoundly impacting voter alignment and shaping American politics.

## 7. Findings

This study investigates the significance of metaphorical language, particularly the journey metaphor, in U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024. The key findings are as follows:

- Vision for the Future: 37.04% of slogans reflected hopeful messages, indicating a shared desire for progress.
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- **Challenges and Solutions:** A total of 25.93% of slogans highlight challenges, while 29.63% emphasize voter identities.
- **Unity and Togetherness:** This theme was decreased by 7.41%.
- **Freedom and Independence:** 18.52%
- **Change and Reform:** Represents 14.81%.

These findings reveal that political slogans are not merely rhetorical tools but vital mechanisms for making complex ideas relatable to voters' experiences and aspirations.

**Bush v. Gore and the 2000 Election:** The contentious election culminated in a Supreme Court ruling that highlighted decisiveness and integrity. The metaphor of "counting every vote" aligns closely with democratic values.

**September 11 and Its Aftermath:** The 9/11 attacks shifted political messaging to themes of security and resilience, exemplified by the metaphor of a "battle for freedom," connecting personal experiences of fear to a national narrative.

**The Great Recession (2007-2009):** Slogans during this economic downturn emphasized recovery and hope. Barack Obama's "Yes We Can" served as a metaphorical journey from despair to revitalization.

**Rise of Social Movements:** Movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo influenced slogans emphasizing social justice and reform. Slogans such as "We are the ones we've been awaiting" illustrate collective calls for change.

**COVID-19 Pandemic (2020):** The health crisis reshaped slogans around community, empathy, and recovery, highlighting transitions from isolation to collective action.

**2020 Presidential Election:** The election's polarizing nature featured slogans that focused on themes of unity versus division and hope versus despair. "Build Back Better" embodies aspirations for post-pandemic resilience.

**2024 Election Cycle:** Future campaigns will likely address climate change, economic inequality, and political polarization, with the journey metaphor remaining relevant for connecting voters personally.

**The findings** indicate that metaphorical frameworks, particularly the journey metaphor, significantly influence voters' perception of political identities. Effective use of these metaphors creates emotional ties and resonates with cultural narratives, thus addressing voters' hopes and concerns. The decline in slogans centered on unity may reflect a shift from shared identities toward individual goals. It is crucial for future political communicators to understand the emotional impact of metaphorical language when connecting with diverse voter demographics.

## 8. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact of the journey metaphor on U.S. presidential campaign slogans from 2000 to 2024. The analysis reveals a dominant trend toward aspirational messaging, with 37% of slogans reflecting a "Vision for the Future," indicating a strong desire for progress during socio-political challenges. While themes of identity and values persist, the notable decline in slogans focused on "Unity and Togetherness" points to increasing polarization among voters.

Campaign slogans are critical in shaping candidates' narratives and resonate deeply with voters' experiences and aspirations. By leveraging metaphorical language, political communicators can effectively engage an increasingly divided electorate. Moving forward, it is essential for candidates to create messages that promote unity and resilience while addressing the evolving hopes of the public. This study underscores the importance of political communication metaphorical frameworks and provides key insights for fostering meaningful voter connections across diverse sociopolitical landscapes.

### 8.1 Recommendations for the study

**Use of Metaphors:** Political communicators must know and use metaphorical language carefully, especially the "journey metaphor," to connect emotionally with voters.

**Addressing Voter Issues:** Candidates should craft messages that reflect the changing hopes and concerns of the public.

**Foster Unity:** In a divided political climate, candidates must convey messages that encourage unity and resilience.

**Recognize Emotional Effects:** It is important to grasp the emotional effects of metaphorical language to reach various voter groups.

### 8.2 Future Research Directions

**Study of the journey metaphor:** Ongoing research should examine the journey metaphor and how it varies in different political situations and election periods.

**Emotional Responses to Metaphors:** Explore the emotional reactions that certain metaphors generate and their effects on voter behavior.

**Role of Social Movements:** Examine how social movements and events (like Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and COVID-19) impact political slogans and the journey metaphor.

**Cultural Comparison:** The journey metaphor's use in U.S. presidential campaigns is compared with its application in other nations to identify cultural differences in political messaging.



**Polarization Effects:** The study further examines how political polarization relates to the use of journey metaphors, especially around unity themes.

**Author Contribution:**

Conceptualization, R.J.; methodology, R.J.; validation, Z.M.; formal analysis, Z.M.; investigation, Z.M.; resources, A.M.M.; data curation, A.M.M.; writing—original draft preparation, all authors contributed equally; writing—review and editing, Z.M.; supervision, R.J.; project administration, R.J. All authors have read and agreed to the publication of the finale version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the study.

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