

Metaphor Density in President Obama's and Governor Romney's Presidential Acceptance Speeches: Implications for Leadership and Conveyance of Vision

Jeffery Scott Mio¹,
Ronald E Riggio² and
Rose E Herndier³

- 1 California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA 91768, USA
- 2 Claremont McKenna College, CA 91711, USA
- 3 University of Indianapolis, IN 46227, USA

Abstract

Metaphors in political speeches may enhance perceived charisma. The present study examined the nomination acceptance speeches of President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney at their respective party's 2012 political conventions. In Study 1, metaphors in the acceptance speeches were identified and categorized. President Obama's speech was more heavily populated with metaphors, and these metaphors tended to be thematic, which spawned repetitive or resonant language. Where Governor Romney used metaphors, there did not seem to be themes or central ideas. In Study 2, 41 participants' underlined passages in both speeches that they felt were inspirational. More of President Obama's passages were underlined than Governor Romney's speech, and Obama's metaphor density remained greater than Romney's metaphor density. Moreover, the passages underlined in Obama's speech were primarily his thematic metaphors. To the extent that President Obama was perceived to be a more charismatic figure than Governor Romney, results supported the notion that metaphors add to perceived charisma. This has implications for business leaders attempting to convey their visions to company workers.

Keywords: Emotional; Charismatic behavior; Political elections; Foreign policy; Psychology

Corresponding author: Jeffery Scott Mio

✉ jsmio@cpp.edu

Psychology and Sociology Department,
California State Polytechnic University,
Pomona, 3801 West Temple Avenue,
Pomona, CA 91768, USA.

Tel: (909) 869-3899

Citation: Mio JS, Riggio RE, Herndier RE. Metaphor Density in President Obama's and Governor Romney's Presidential Acceptance Speeches: Implications for Leadership and Conveyance of Vision. *Acta Psychopathol.* 2017, 3:3.

Received: April 13, 2017; **Accepted:** April 25, 2017; **Published:** May 05, 2017

Introduction

Research has suggested that a number of factors influence perception of candidates in political elections—factors that impact whether or not a candidate is elected to office [1]. For example, one well-known line of research has focused on the physical, facial characteristics of candidates, showing that naïve observers can pick the winning candidates in elections from photographs of their faces [2]. Another line of research suggests that nonverbal vocal cues of dominance may predict election outcomes [3]. Nonverbal cues, in particular, are believed to play an important part in perceptions of an individual's charisma, and charisma is associated with leader emergence [4,5]. While models of charisma and charismatic leadership tend to focus more on these emotional and nonverbal aspects of charismatic behavior, verbal cues, including eloquent speech, play an important part in effective charismatic leadership [5,6]. One aspect of speech that is linked to charisma is the use of metaphor.

Metaphors have many communicative functions. Although we often think metaphors are simply used to compare two terms in a colorful manner, Ortony's seminal 1975 article on metaphor discussed that metaphors are a necessary tool for at least three important reasons: compactness, inexpressibility, and vividness [7].

Compactness refers to the fact that metaphors essentially facilitate particularization. "Chunks" of information can be transferred in a compact metaphor. Hence, when we say that an agent was a "*Cold War Warrior*" we do not have to identify all of the qualities of "warrior" and why they applied to the agent during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union or even that the agent was a relic of the past. Inexpressibility is the second reason why Ortony suggested that metaphors are necessary for communication. Quite often, metaphors are used as a means of expressing something when literal language does not suffice. The final reason why a metaphor is considered necessary, and a reason that is most relevant to our study, is its ability to bring about emotions because metaphors are so vivid.

Metaphors can be persuasive devices, because metaphors have information processing aspects, serve as solutions, and stir emotions. As Chaiken and Stangor [8] indicated, metaphors combine the central and peripheral routes to persuasion, as they combine the logical with the emotional aspects of a message.

Thibodeau and Boroditsky [9] found that metaphors were effective in framing political issues, influencing research participants to conceptualize issues and support different solutions depending upon which frames were used in characterizing crime as a *plague* or *infection* versus *criminals preying on unsuspecting victims*.

Metaphors are considered a rhetorical tool in public discourse helping listeners to understand new and different perspectives of issues being discussed in the political arena [10]. Additionally, people at least since the time of Aristotle have found metaphors to be persuasive literary devices [11].

Presidents are often judged on the dimension of “charisma” [12-15]. As mentioned, perceptions of charisma are affected by nonverbal cues, but they can also be affected by the verbal content of speech. Since most of us do not personally meet presidential candidates, charisma must be judged “from a distance”—via media portrayals. Among the most commonly used factors used to judge charisma from a populace is the analysis of political speeches [14,15]. In fact, Simonton conducted a careful analysis of speeches and newspaper evaluations of presidents, together with their administrations, to develop an ordered list of presidents’ charisma ratings from George Washington to Ronald Reagan.

Metaphor Density and Charisma

Mio et al. [1] suggested that *charismatic* leaders, in particular, use metaphors as a tool to inspire and motivate followers. In Study 1, Mio et al. examined the first inaugural addresses of all presidents who had presented such addresses (presidents such as Andrew Johnson and Gerald Ford were not elected, so they did not have inaugural addresses). The first inaugural addresses were those expressly designed to set the groundwork for their presidencies, and as there were no guarantees of a second inaugural address, the first inaugural addresses were considered to be the most important speech of a new president’s term. Mio and his colleagues found that presidents with positive charisma scores [15] had speeches that were much denser with metaphors than presidents with negative charisma scores. **Table 1** displays the rankings of presidents based upon Simonton’s [15] charisma scores along with the respective metaphor density scores of their first inaugural addresses.

As can be seen, those presidents Simonton found to have positive charisma scores had an average metaphor density score for their first inaugural addresses of 0.0054, whereas those presidents with negative charisma scores had an average metaphor density score of 0.0023. Thus, presidents with positive charisma scores had speeches that were over twice as dense with metaphors as their negative charisma counterparts.

In Study 2 of the Mio et al. [1] paper, upper division political science students underlined passages from each of six presidential

inaugural addresses they found to be inspiring. The researchers made sure that the packets of six addresses were approximately equal in length, i.e., presidents with long speeches were counterbalanced with presidents with short speeches. Moreover, each packet contained presidential inaugural addresses that were scattered throughout history, so that any given participant would not have either all recent presidents or all distant presidents. The underlined passages were then evaluated for metaphor content, and the total numbers of identified metaphors were divided by the number of words in the underlined passages. This yielded a metaphor density score for inspirational passages that could be compared with the metaphor density score for the speeches overall. The far right-hand column in **Table 1** reflects the metaphor densities of these inspirational passages. We might note that Mio et al. included Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton in their analyses and table, whereas **Table 1** in this study just includes the original presidents evaluated by Simonton [15]. For both the presidents with positive and negative charisma scores, the metaphor density scores for their perceived inspirational passages were approximately twice as large as the metaphor density scores for their speeches overall.

Obama, Romney and Charisma

The popular media has long contended the President Obama had an advantage over Governor Romney with respect to charisma [16-22]. For example, in *National Journal*, Condon [17] quotes political analyst Sherry Bebitch Jeffe saying, “In Romney versus Obama, Obama wins the Charisma Bowl”. Feldman [18] identified “the charisma gap” as one of the 12 reasons why Governor Romney lost to President Obama. Romm [20] cites the Mio et al. [1] study connecting metaphor usage with charisma. Moreover, Romm indicated that repetition of phrases or concepts leads to more connection with the audience: “Obama is clearly more comfortable with repetition. Indeed, he often appears to go off script to repeat a line for emphasis, showing he has more language intelligence than his own speech-writers” (p: 2). In combination with metaphors, this implies that root metaphors in speeches can be effective rhetorical devices. Root metaphors, also known as conceptual metaphors, are thematic metaphors with which speeches can resonate. For example, in Lakoff and Johnson’s [23] seminal book on the subject, the authors note that, the use of the root metaphor “*ARGUMENT IS WAR*” is evidenced in phrases such as “Your claims are indefensible,” “He attacked every weak point in my argument,” and “He shot down all of my arguments” (p: 4). Some researchers have criticized the notion of the root metaphor as being a product about which a user may not be aware [24], being incompletely developed [25], or too broad [26]. However, it is undeniable that many politicians and their speech writers often attempt to build speeches around central themes.

In examining President Obama’s Democratic presidential nomination acceptance speech, which along with Governor Romney’s Republican presidential nomination acceptance speech served as the basis of the present study, a consistent root metaphor President Obama used was to liken the direction of his presidency to a “*long and difficult journey that will lead to a better*

Table 1: Presidents' charismatic scores (based upon Simonton's [17] ratings) and their overall metaphor density scores compared with their metaphor density scores for inspiring passages.

President	Simonton's Charisma Score	Number of Metaphors	Number of Words in Speech	Overall Metaphor Density	Inspiring Passages Metaphor Density
Positive Charismatics (n=16)					
Franklin Delano Roosevelt	2.5	21	2128	0.0099	0.0125
Andrew Jackson	2.2	3	1263	0.0024	0.0046
Lyndon Baynes Johnson	1.5	17	1517	0.0112	0.0103
John Fitzgerald Kennedy	1.3	17	1354	0.0126	0.0147
Theodore Roosevelt	1.2	6	1064	0.0056	0.0016
Ronald Reagan	1.2	25	2661	0.0094	0.0154
Franklin Pierce	0.9	15	3641	0.0041	0.0142
James Garfield	0.6	13	3477	0.0037	0.0029
William McKinley	0.6	9	4389	0.0021	0.0018
Dwight D Eisenhower	0.6	10	2750	0.0036	0.0040
Abraham Lincoln	0.5	8	3636	0.0022	0.0099
Richard M Nixon	0.3	39	2041	0.0191	0.0251
Thomas Jefferson	0.2	18	1881	0.0096	0.0168
George Washington	0.1	6	1631	0.0037	0.0093
Martin Van Buren	0.1	9	4301	0.0021	0.0044
Harry S Truman	0.0	4	2136	0.0019	0.0033
Means	0.87	13.75	2491	0.0054	0.0107
Negative Charismatics (n=18)					
James Buchanan	-0.0	4	3163	0.0013	0.0000
Woodrow Wilson	-0.0	13	1760	.0074	0.0120
James K Polk	-0.1	9	5352	.0017	0.0030
Benjamin Harrison	-0.1	12	4926	0.0024	0.0029
Zachary Taylor	-0.2	1	1239	0.0008	0.0000
John Adams	-0.3	11	2590	0.0042	0.0082
Jimmy Carter	-0.4	7	1286	0.0054	0.0048
Warren G Harding	-0.5	25	3861	0.0065	0.0126
John Quincy Adams	-0.6	16	3267	0.0049	0.0117
Herbert Hoover	-0.6	7	3989	0.0018	0.0016
William Henry Harrison	-0.7	19	9156	0.0021	0.0085
Rutherford B Hayes	-0.8	2	2998	0.0007	0.0018
James Monroe	-0.9	4	2688	0.0015	0.0000
William Howard Taft	-1.1	5	6100	0.0008	0.0043
James Madison	-1.2	6	1300	0.0046	0.0026
Grover Cleveland	-1.5	0	1943	0.0000	0.0000
Calvin Coolidge	-1.9	7	4445	0.0016	0.0038
Ulysses S Grant	-2.2	3	1178	0.0025	0.0000
Means	-0.73	8.39	3403	0.0023	0.0050

Note: The table in the Mio et al. [1] study included the data from Presidents George HW Bush and Bill Clinton, with estimates of their charisma scores. President Clinton's metaphor density scores were slightly higher than the average presidents with positive charisma scores, while President Bush's metaphor density scores were significantly higher (seven and four times higher, respectively) than the average presidents with negative charisma scores.

place." He thus acknowledged the difficulties he encountered in his first term in office but asked for patience because things would ultimately become better. Governor Romney's Republican presidential nomination acceptance speech did not contain such resonance, supporting Romm's [20] contention that President Obama seemed much more comfortable with repetition than did Governor Romney. If there were such a resonant theme for Governor Romney's speech, it just criticized President Obama's foreign policy by using the metaphors of President Obama going

on an "apology tour," accusing him of betraying friends by saying he would "throw allies like Israel under the bus."

As stated earlier, our present study compared metaphor use in President Barack Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, with Governor Mitt Romney's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. These speeches represent a shift from nominees persuading their respective Democratic and Republican Party members for nomination,

to appealing to *all* voters for the presidency. It is predicted, consistent with perceptions of Obama as the more charismatic of the candidates, that Obama's metaphor density in his acceptance speech would be significantly greater than Romney's.

Study 1

Method

Procedure: We used the speeches transcribed by National Public Radio, found at www.npr.org. We eliminated parts of the transcripts that were not related to either candidate's speech. For example, President Obama's transcripts contained, "Audience members: Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!" and this was eliminated from analysis (Chanting).

One issue that is important in studying metaphors that arise in natural discourse is how one identifies what is a metaphor and what is not. The Pragglejazz Group [27] proposed using what they termed the MIP (metaphor identification procedure). This method is potentially useful when studying a large corpus of relatively brief responses and needing to report the reliability among disparate judges. While we were aware of this methodology, we chose not to use it for our purposes, mainly because our group consisted of undergraduate students who did not have the kind of training that the Pragglejazz Group suggested was needed.

Members of our research team read both President Obama's and Governor Romney's respective party acceptance speeches. Rather than evaluate every single word for its metaphoricality, we examined phrases for their metaphoricality. If a metaphor was identified by even one member, we engaged in a lengthy discussion to determine if this passage should be included in our analysis. Thus, because we arrived at 100% agreement, this obviated the need to calculate a reliability coefficient for judges examining different corpuses of stimuli. Metaphors were counted as a single unit, so despite the number of words within the metaphor, it was still counted as just one metaphor. Thus, Governor Romney's metaphor "*President Obama has thrown allies like Israel under the bus*" and "*All the laws and legislation in the world will never heal this world like the loving hearts and arms of mothers and fathers*" were both counted as one metaphor despite their obvious difference in length. Count of metaphors divided by the total number of words in a particular speech gave us the metaphor density score.¹

Results: Governor Romney's speech yielded a metaphor density score of 0.0047 and President Obama's speech had a metaphor density score of 0.0070. In other words, President Obama's speech was about 49% more highly dense with metaphors

than was Governor Romney's speech. Interestingly, Governor Romney's speech was more highly dense than speeches from past presidents with negative charisma scores (0.0047 vs. 0.0023) in the Mio et al. [1] study, and President Obama's speech was slightly more highly dense than speeches from past presidents with positive charisma scores (0.0070 vs. 0.0054). These results are in line with the general perception that President Obama was a more charismatic candidate than Governor Romney. However, we must point out that Governor Romney's metaphor density score was closer to the density scores of past presidents with positive charisma scores than with past presidents with negative charisma scores.

Discussion: To the extent that metaphor content can predict charisma, our results support the popular contention that Barack Obama was a more charismatic candidate than Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential campaign. Obama's nomination acceptance speech was more highly dense with metaphors than was Romney's comparable speech. Moreover, Obama's speech seemed to be more highly cohesive as it resonated to a central theme of inviting the electorate to join him in a journey that may be difficult and challenging at times, but would ultimately lead to a better place. He returned to this theme several times in his speech, giving the speech a sense of cohesion. We could not detect any such themes in Romney's speech. Instead, his speech seemed to be divided into unrelated sections where he shifted from introducing himself, criticized Obama for his foreign policy, criticized Obama for his economic policies, and concluded with the greatness of America. However, we must note that Governor Romney's speech was nearly as dense with metaphors as were presidents with positive charisma scores in the Mio et al. [1] study.

Study 2

The Mio et al. [1] study examined which parts of presidential inaugural addresses were perceived to be inspirational. The methods conducted in that study were replicated in the present study, except that the participant group was different, in that traditional introductory psychology students were utilized.

Method

Participants: We were able to collect responses from 41 participants (17 males and 24 females) from the Human Subject Pool at a social science department at a major university in Southern California. Participants received course credit or extra credit from their course instructors, with the majority of the participants enrolled in introductory psychology; the remaining students were upper division psychology students whose instructors gave extra credit points for participation.

Stimuli: Booklets were compiled from the respective candidates' nomination presidential acceptance speeches. The booklets were counterbalanced such that half of the participants read President Obama's speech first and half of the other participants read Governor Romney's speech first. The cover page of the booklets also asked for demographic data and a 5-point scale of their self-identification of political conservatism/liberalism, and whom

¹This methodology was used in order to compare the present results with the Mio et al. [1] study, which used the same methodology. We see this as a conservative estimate of metaphor density. In Governor Romney's "All the laws and legislation in the world will never heal this world like the loving hearts and arms of mothers and fathers" metaphor, some may see this as containing between one and three metaphors ("heal this world," "loving hearts," and "loving arms" might be seen as separate metaphors by some or all one metaphors by others), but no one would dispute the fact that this sentence was metaphorical.

they supported for president (or if they were even registered to vote).

Procedures: Participants filled out the coversheet with demographic information, and then underlined all passages they felt were particularly inspiring. Participants were explicitly told them that they could define “passage” in any way they decided, whether it be just a few words, as long as a sentence, or even as long as a paragraph. Also, they were informed that half of them were going to be reading the Obama speech first and half of them were going to be reading the Romney speech first. The participants were instructed not to underline everything in one speech and nothing in the other speech, just because they preferred one candidate or the other. They were also told that there was neither right nor wrong answers, and that we were just interested in the kinds of political speech that inspired people. They were allowed to work at their own pace. Participants seemed to take this task seriously as most of them took nearly the entire hour of allotted time for this study.

Results: Not surprisingly, the majority of our college-aged sample favored President Obama over Governor Romney. Of those participants expressing preferences, 27 favored President Obama, whereas 10 favored Governor Romney. The rest of the participants either indicated that they were not registered to vote (2) or they indicated that they supported a third party (2; interestingly, one participant indicated that she favored the Green Party, yet she indicated that she was somewhat conservative).

Inspirational passages were more highly dense with metaphors than the overall density of the passages. As can be seen in **Table 2**, both males and females underlined more passages from Obama’s speech than Romney’s speech, and these underlined passages were more highly dense with metaphors. **Table 3** displays the metaphor density comparison between Obama’s and Romney’s respective speeches. While the 10 Romney supporters’ scores were moderated a bit from these overall findings, they still underlined more of President Obama’s passages as being more inspirational than those of Governor Romney.

Both males and females yielded metaphor density scores higher for President Obama’s passages than for Governor Romney’s passages that were considered to be inspiring, with Obama’s density score being about 51% more highly dense than Romney’s speech. Males seemed to respond a bit more to Obama’s speech than did females, but both males and females had higher density scores for Obama inspiring passages than for Romney inspiring passages. Compared to the Mio et al. [1] study, the metaphor density scores for these passages are quite similar to the overall metaphor density scores of the entire speeches, as opposed to being higher in metaphor density as Mio et al. discovered. Certainly, there is a difference between nomination acceptance speeches than inaugural addresses, but this result was surprising given that both kinds of speech are designed to resonate to the broad populace.

As stated above, President Obama’s nomination acceptance speech had a central theme—or root metaphor—to which he referred throughout his speech whereas Governor Romney’s speech did not. Thus, it might not be surprising that in an analysis of the types of metaphors to which participants resonated; Obama’s central theme was overwhelmingly identified as the most inspirational. While both President Obama and Governor Romney had 20 different metaphors identified throughout their speeches, Obama’s metaphor of “*Our path may be difficult but it leads to a better place*” had 12 variations or separate references to this metaphor and was identified 124 by our participants. The second most identified inspirational metaphor (53 times) was “*We keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon*” and is related to the “*difficult journey leading to a better place*” metaphor. The third most identified metaphor Obama used related to education (“*Education was the gateway to opportunity for me*”) where there were four separate uses of this thematic metaphor, yielding 26 identifications of inspiration by our participants. The fourth-most identified metaphor (21 times) was “*No one who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their head or the care that they need when they come home*” related to a

Table 2: Underlined passages for president Obama and Governor Romney.

	Obama’s Speech	Romney’s Speech	Percent Increase for Obama over Romney
Males	557 (M=32.76)	386 (M=22.71)	44%
Females	780 (M=32.50)	636 (M=26.50)	23%
Total	1,337 (M=32.61)	1,022 (M=24.93)	31%

Table 3: Metaphor densities for president Obama’s and Governor Romney’s underlined passages.

	Number of Words in Underlined Passages	Number of Metaphors in Underlined Passages	Metaphor Density Scores	% Increase for Obama over Romney
Obama				
Males	13,494 (M=794)	124 (M=7.29)	0.0092	92%
Females	21,623 (M=901)	147 (M=6.12)	0.0068	45%
Romney				
Males	8,552 (M=503)	41 (M=2.41)	0.0048	-
Females	10,019 (M=417)	47 (M=1.96)	0.0047	-
Total				
Obama	35,117 (M=857)	271 (M=6.61)	0.0071	
Romney	18,571 (M=453)	88 (M=2.15)	0.0047	51%

third metaphor in Obama's speech, which dealt with fairness for ordinary citizens. If this were combined with other instances where he used metaphors to discuss fairness and people being treated equally ("*everyone shared in that pride and success from the corner office to the factory floor*" and "*everyone gets a fair shot and everyone does their fair share and everyone plays by the same rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC*"), this metaphor was identified as inspirational 48 times.

In contrast, Governor Romney did not have any thematic metaphors in his speech, and identification of inspirational passages was generally disbursed throughout his metaphorical phrases. The most-identified metaphorical passage was related to the security a loving family gives to its children. The entire passage was: "*All the laws and legislation in the world will never heal this world like the loving hearts and arms of mothers and fathers. If every child could drift to sleep feeling wrapped in the love of their family—and God's love—this world would be a far more gentle and better place.*" The first and second sentences were divided in this study, and the second sentence was identified 14 times as being inspirational. This yielded 18 times participants identified either the first or second sentence as being inspirational if the two passages were combined. The next most-identified metaphorical passage for inspiration was one that included "*bright horizon*" in relation to education being important; this passage was identified 13 times as being inspirational. The next most-identified passage for inspiration was one that defined America as heroic, coming to the world stage in World War II to "*save the world from unspeakable darkness,*" which was identified as being inspirational 11 times. A metaphor near the beginning of Romney's speech ("*Tonight I am asking you to join me to walk together to a better future*") and near the end of the speech ("*I will work with all my energy and soul to restore that America, to lift our eyes to a better future*") were both identified 10 times as being inspirational. If Governor Romney arguably expressed any sort of thematic metaphor, it was criticizing President Obama's foreign policy with his metaphors of Obama going on an "*apology tour,*" Obama having "*thrown allies like Israel under the bus,*" and Russia seeing "*a little less flexibility and more backbone.*" However, these passages were not identified as being very inspirational, as they were identified only 2, 3, and 3 times, respectively. Perhaps a reason why these passages were not very resonant with our participants is because they are negative and critical of President Obama. The most inspirational metaphors that Governor Romney used were positive. As some political observers have identified (e.g., syndicated columnist Mark Shields), voters seem to resonate more to positivity, so Governor Romney's negative statements seemed to have fallen flat, at least as judged by our participants.

Conclusion

To the extent that charisma and inspiration can be measured by metaphor content, President Obama can be considered more charismatic than Governor Romney, at least as assessed by our metaphor density findings. Not only were more passages in President Obama's presidential nomination acceptance speech

identified as inspirational, but the metaphor density of those passages identified was also higher than the metaphor density of Governor Romney's passages identified as being particularly inspirational. However, unlike the findings of Mio et al. [1], the identified inspirational passages were not more highly densely populated with metaphors than were the two speeches overall. This may be due to differences between nomination acceptance speeches and first inaugural addresses. Alternatively, perhaps both candidates read metaphor literature, and consequently increased metaphor content in their speeches. Certainly, Governor Romney's speech had a metaphor density score comparable to the metaphor density scores of presidents with positive charisma scores in the Mio et al. [1] study.

Additionally it was found that thematic metaphors President Obama used were seen as inspirational, as these passages were greatly identified as inspirational, especially in contrast to any metaphors that Governor Romney used. This was true despite the fact that both candidates had comparable numbers of different kinds of metaphors (20 separate metaphors each). This result truly underscores the importance of thematic metaphors to which the speaker refers, as Romm [20] suggested. Romm [20] observed that President Obama seemed to be much more comfortable with repetition of themes than Governor Romney was, and would even go "off script" to amplify a theme in response to crowd reaction.

Discussion

We conclude that President Obama was measurably more charismatic and inspirational than Governor Romney, at least as measured by the metaphor density of their respective presidential nomination acceptance speeches, and by our participants' identification of passages they found inspirational. This conclusion is in keeping with popular assessments of these two men [17-21], so this conclusion should not be surprising. Our conclusions are based upon four separate analyses of our stimuli and our data: (1) The overall metaphor density of President Obama's Democratic presidential nomination acceptance speech was greater than the overall metaphor density of Governor Romney's Republican presidential nomination acceptance speech; (2) More of President Obama's passages were identified as inspirational than Governor Romney's passages; (3) President Obama's identified inspirational passages maintained a greater metaphor density than Governor Romney's identified inspirational passages; and (4) Thematic metaphors in President Obama's speech were more effective, as they were overwhelmingly identified as inspirational, whereas Governor Romney's speech did not include resonant thematic metaphors. Romney's attempt to deploy a thematic metaphor based on Obama's foreign policy was expressly *not* seen as inspirational by our participants.

It should be noted that we examined a condition—the 2012 presidential election—that almost demanded charismatic speech. As Engbers and Fucilla [28] reported, while President Obama was generally perceived as a charismatic/transformational leader, his speeches to groups assembled to help him develop legislative policies in his first four months of his first term in office was

more rationally, factually based. These kinds of speeches to such focused groups and for such a specific objective as developing legislation do not require inspirational language but rather require language that will help to develop policies to address problems. On the other hand, inspiring voters to return you to office require broader language such as metaphors to which people can resonate, so as most Washington “insiders” would agree; campaigning is much different from governing.

We might caution against an assumption that more metaphors automatically lead to perceived charisma. In examining the metaphor density scores from the Mio et al. [1] study, President George H.W. Bush had the second highest metaphor density score of all presidents from Presidents George Washington to Bill Clinton, yet he was assessed to have had a negative charisma score. In fact, we believe that there is a curvilinear relation between metaphor content and perceptions of charisma. If a speech contains too few metaphors, the speaker may be perceived as dry and uninspiring. On the other hand, if a speech contains too many metaphors, the speaker may be perceived as being obtuse, evasive, and too difficult to understand.

Comparing President Obama’s and Governor Romney’s respective speeches, the former had a strong root metaphor—that of a long and difficult road leading to a better place, whereas the latter included not a single root metaphor. We believe this difference allowed recipients of their speeches to respond much more favorably to President Obama than to Governor Romney. Perhaps this is an important component of a concept as elusive as “charisma.” This is in keeping with Riggio’s [5,29] notion of charisma including one’s ability to regulate emotional communication. For people to feel an emotional connection—and in particular a charismatic one—with another individual, they must be able both to understand and to resonate with the person with whom they are interacting. Certainly, it is much easier to be charismatic when interacting with people one-on-

one, and there are indications that both President Obama and Governor Romney did each have such personal charismatic skills [30]. However, most people do not personally meet presidential candidates, so their only assessments of them are based on the candidates’ speeches (and, of course, political analysts, who seem to be more postdictive than predictive, basing their judgments on the subsequent polls). We might caution, however, that because participants knew that the speeches came from President Obama and Governor Romney, we cannot discount the possibility of bias on the part of our participants who favored Obama over Romney to some degree.

Not surprisingly, President Obama carried his path/road/journey metaphor into his second term. Many people may recall that President Obama’s second inaugural speech supported LGBT rights. The passage that presented this support resonated to the *long and difficult road* metaphor, as he said that our path traveled from Seneca Falls to Selma to Stonewall, using alliteration to link women’s rights as represented by Seneca Falls, New York, to minority civil rights as represented by the march on Selma, Alabama, to LGBT rights as represented by the stand taken at the Stonewall Bar in New York City. Thus, he not only continued to connect with his supporters and listeners by resonating with the familiar theme of a long, difficult road, but his choice of alliteration was another rhetorical flourish to “regulate emotional connection” with his audience.

Implications for leaders of businesses are clear. When trying to transform companies to follow a certain path, business leaders who are perceived to be charismatic are able to convey their ideas and get workers to accept that these are shared goals [13,31]. Our findings suggest that leaders will be more effective if they stick to a central organizing theme or metaphor around which they can convey their visions for their respective companies. In so doing, they will make it easier for their workers to understand and accept these visions.

References

- 1 Mio JS, Riggio RE, Levin S, Reese R (2005) Presidential leadership and charisma: The effects of metaphor. *Leadersh Q* 16: 287-294.
- 2 Todorov A, Mandisodza AN, Goren A, Hall CC (2005) Inferences of competence from faces predict election outcomes. *Science* 308: 1623-1626.
- 3 Gregory SW Jr, Gallagher TJ (2002) Spectral analysis of candidates' nonverbal vocal communication: Predicting U.S. presidential election outcomes. *Soc Psychol Q* 65: 298-308.
- 4 Friedman HS, Prince LM, Riggio RE, DiMatteo MR (1980) Understanding and assessing nonverbal expressiveness: The Affective Communication Test. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 39: 333-351.
- 5 Riggio RE (1987) *The charisma quotient*. New York: Dodd, Mead.
- 6 Conger JA, Kanungo RN (1988) *Charismatic leadership: The elusive factor in organizational effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 7 Ortony A (1975) Why metaphors are necessary and not just nice. *Educ Theory* 25: 45-53.
- 8 Chaiken S, Stangor C (1987) Attitudes and attitude change. *Annu Rev Psychol* 38: 575-630.
- 9 Thibodeau PH, Boroditsky L (2011) Metaphors we think with: The role of metaphor in reasoning. *PLoS ONE* 6: 1-11.
- 10 Nguyen NTB, Umemoto K (2012) Leading with metaphoric intelligence. *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5: 41-51.
- 11 Read SJ, Cesa IL, Jones DK, Collins NL (1990) When is the federal budget like a baby? Metaphor in political rhetoric. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 5: 125-149.
- 12 Deluga RJ (1997) Relationship among American presidential charismatic leadership, narcissism, and rated performance. *Leadersh Q* 8: 49-65.
- 13 House RJ (1977) A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. In: Hunt JG and Larson LL (eds.) *Leadership: The cutting edge*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press pp: 189-207.
- 14 House RJ, Spangler WD, Woycke J (1991) Personality and charisma in the U.S. presidency: A psychological theory of leader effectiveness. *Admin Sci Q* 36: 364-396.
- 15 Simonton DK (1988) Presidential style: Personality, biography, and performance. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 55: 928-936.
- 16 <http://www.ereleases.com/pr/charisma-obama-beat-romney-justreleased-kindle-book-predicts-obama-victory-based-charisma-80156>
- 17 <http://nationaljournal.com/2012-presidential-campaign/romney-s-bland-brand-can-it-power-him-to-the-white-house-20120107>
- 18 <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/DC-Decoder/2012/1107/Election-2012-12-reasons-Obama-won-and-Romney-lost/The-charisma-gap>
- 19 <http://thedemocraticdaily.com/2012/06/01/obama-win-charisma-right-wing-author/>
- 20 <http://ideas.time.com/2012/08/14/who-is-a-better-communicator-monmey-or-obama/>
- 21 Romm J (2012) *Language intelligence: lessons on persuasion from Jesus, Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Lady Gaga*. North Charleston, SC: Create Space.
- 22 http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/2012/08/the_slate_surveymonkey_political_survey_is_barack_obama_book_smart_street_smart_or_both_how_honest_is_mitt_romney_.html
- 23 Lakoff G, Johnson M (1980) *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 24 Vervaeke J, Kennedy JM (1996) Metaphors in language and thought: falsification and multiple meanings. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 11: 273-284.
- 25 Wiseman R (2007) Ancient roman metaphors for communication. *Metaphor Symb* 22: 41-78.
- 26 Kennedy V (2013) *Strange brew: Metaphors of magic and science in rock music*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- 27 Praggeljaz Group (2007) MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol* 22: 1-39.
- 28 Engbers T, Fucilla L (2012) Transformational Leadership and the Obama Presidency. *Soc Sci Q* 93: 1127-1145.
- 29 Riggio RE (1998) Charisma. In: Friedman HS (ed.) *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press pp: 387-396.
- 30 <http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2012/obama-or-romney-the-choice-is-clear/>
- 31 Riggio RE (2013) *Introduction to industrial/organizational psychology* (6th edn). Boston: Pearson.