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THE 2024 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: THE DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF KAMALA HARRIS AND DONALD TRUMP

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This article analyzes the political discourses of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the only televised debate for the 2024 presidential elections. **Methodology:** The methodology adopts a qualitative approach, involving a thorough review of the transcripts of both candidates' speeches during the debate. For the discourse analysis, George Lakoff's cognitive science theory is used, which proposes differentiated models for liberals and conservatives (the Nurturant Parent model and the Strict Father model, respectively). **Results:** The results examine the rhetoric, patterns, and issues –focusing on economics and immigration, also mentioning the debate's "golden minute"– in relation to Lakoff's models. Kamala Harris impacts her electorate by appealing, above all, to her cognitive frame through the Nurturant Parent model, whereas Donald Trump reinforces his cognitive frame while repeatedly alluding to his opponent's frame and model. **Conclusions:** Harris emphasizes the Nurturant Parent model in her proposals and in his criticisms of her opponent. Trump reinforces the Strict Father model but also criticizes the Nurturant Parent model. The winner of the debate according to the mainstream national and international media outlets was Harris. However, Trump won the presidential election.

Keywords: US elections; discourse analysis; Kamala Harris; Donald Trump; cognitive frames; George Lakoff; Nurturant Parent; Strict Father.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article provides a critical analysis of the political speeches of candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, based on the cognitive models proposed by George Lakoff. To this end, it studies the only televised debate between these candidates, which took place on September 10, 2024, at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The Harris-Trump debate, moderated by journalists Lindsey Davis and David Muir, was broadcast by ABC News¹. The rules of the debate set a duration of 90 minutes, with two 5-minute commercial breaks and no audience. The candidates did not know the topics or questions in advance and were not allowed to bring notes. They had two minutes to respond, another two minutes for follow-up questions, and one minute for clarifications, further questions, or responses to inquiries. The microphones were only turned on during the response rounds.

This is the first and only presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris in the lead-up to the 2024 election². It follows a previous debate, held on June 27 between candidate and former president Donald Trump and then-candidate and president Joe Biden, whose failure led President Biden to announce his withdrawal from the presidential race on July 21, 2024, handing the reins to Vice President Harris.

1 The video of the entire debate is available on the ABC News website (2024).

2 Candidate Trump refused to participate in further debates with the Democratic candidate — "THERE WILL BE NO THIRD DEBATE!" Trump posted on Truth Social, referencing his first face-off with President Joe Biden in June and his second with Harris on Tuesday (Sullivan, 2024).

Political communication finds in televised debates an excellent opportunity to analyze speeches in detail, that is, the discursive strategies employed and the networks that make up their structure. Therefore, this research aims to address aspects such as the analysis of argumentative and persuasive strategies, as well as the degree of interpellation between candidates, using the models established for conservatives and liberals by George Lakoff, in order to better understand the leadership styles and political communication strategies used in the context of the 2024 US presidential elections.

1.1. Televised political debates in the United States

This research is framed within the analysis of a long-standing American tradition of televised presidential debates, which began on September 26, 1960, with the first televised debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. However, as Golway (2004)³ indicates, there had already been other radio debates between presidential candidates, and the Democratic Party primary elections debate was televised in 1956. According to Hendershot (2024), the lack of televised political debates in the 1950s was largely due to the legal restrictions of the time, which made their production⁴ difficult. The 1960s marked a turning point with the Nixon-Kennedy debate: "A new way of campaigning had been born, a new way of winning over public opinion" (Padilla Castillo, 2014, p. 109). The next televised debate had to wait until 1976, when Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter faced off.

Since then, there have been numerous televised presidential debates⁵ and, consequently, analyses derived from their study from different perspectives and areas of research. The impact of televised presidential debates on public opinion and voting intentions has been the focus of numerous studies that modulate this influence from greater to lesser depending on the theoretical approach adopted⁶. These analyses are important because, as Holz et al. (2016) note in their study with focus groups, for many citizens, "seeing both candidates answer the same questions at the same time made it easier for them to compare them directly" (p. 9). Along the same lines, Jamieson (2024) argues for the need to maintain this model, given the recent vote by the Republican National Committee in April 2022 to unanimously withdraw from the

³ "Twelve years earlier, in 1948, up to 80 million people had tuned in to their radios to listen to Republican rivals Thomas E. Dewey of New York and Harold Stassen of Minnesota debate each other in Portland ahead of the Oregon presidential primary elections. In 1956, the two leading Democratic candidates, Adlai Stevenson of Illinois and Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, had faced off in Miami before the Florida primary elections. That debate was televised nationally" (Golway, 2004). (See also Skoko, 2005).

⁴ "Debates were not broadcast in the 1950s, in part out of legal concerns. Federal regulations required equal airtime for all candidates, not just those of the two major parties. The networks didn't want the headache" (Hendershot, 2024).

⁵ The list can be summarized as follows: Kennedy vs. Nixon (1960); Ford vs. Carter (1976); Carter vs. Reagan (1980); Reagan vs. Mondale (1984); Bush vs. Dukakis (1988); Clinton vs. Bush vs. Perot (1992); Clinton vs. Dole (1996); Bush vs. Gore (2000); Bush vs. Kerry (2004); Obama vs. McCain (2008); Obama vs. Romney (2012); Clinton vs. Trump (2016); Trump vs. Biden (2020); Trump vs. Biden (2024); Trump vs. Harris (2024). All debates and their complete transcripts can be viewed on The American Presidency Project website (The American Presidency Project, n.d.)

⁶ From the manual by Juárez-Gámiz et al. (2020), which offers a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding electoral debates at the global level, to the analysis based on focus groups (McKinney & Carlin, 1994), the contrast between deliberative and participatory democracy (Mutz, 2006), and the identification of semantic trends in presidential debates from 2000 to 2020 (Hayes & Poole, 2022).

Commission on Presidential Debates. Jamieson (2015) had already argued that these debates help to better understand and predict the future behavior of the eventual winner.

During the last decade, the comparison between candidates provided by televised debates has been complemented by a subsequent review of media outlets that carry out fact-checking practices in order to facilitate informed decision-making (Diep, 2024), although emotions and feelings have now become so legitimized that in many cases they seem to be replacing the desirable rational examination by the population (Dader García, 2024, p. 189).

1.2. Cognitive Linguistics: George Lakoff's Frameworks

This work addresses a critical analysis of the political discourses of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the only televised debate that took place on September 10, 2024, on the ABC News network from the field of cognitive linguistics and, more specifically, from the mental frames theory of George Lakoff (2016; 2017).

In his book *Don't Think of an Elephant: Language and Political Debate* (2017), Lakoff argues that "frames are mental structures that shape our worldview" (p. 11). According to him, policies are shaped by these frames, which also affects the institutions from which they operate. He emphasizes that "a change of frame is a social change" (Lakoff, 2017, p. 11). However, these frames are not embodied in a visible or audible part of reality but rather constitute what the author defines as "the cognitive unconscious", which shapes how people perceive reality and structure their reasoning. Thus, Lakoff asserts that while people "cannot consciously access" this cognitive unconscious, they can understand it "through its consequences", which are none other than how they think about reality and "what they consider to be the common sense" (Lakoff, 2017, p. 11).

Lakoff also teaches that denying a frame implies evoking it, as happened to Nixon when, on television, in the midst of the Watergate scandal, he said, "I am not a criminal", and immediately everyone began to think of Nixon as a criminal (Lakoff, 2017). This evocative effect is especially important in current political discourse in order to incorporate certain content into voters' thinking regarding the candidate or the opposing candidate. In this sense, Lakoff's assertion that truth alone will not set people free can also be understood, since it is necessary to frame truths, given that people think in frames, and if the facts do not fit the frame, the frame remains, but the facts bounce off. This aspect is especially important when analyzing criticisms of the opponent, since from this perspective it is argued that there will be speeches that have no effect on the electorate because they are incompatible with their mental framework.

To delve deeper into George Lakoff's theory, which will be applied in this study, it is worth referring to his work *Moral Politics: How Conservatives and Liberals Think* (2016), in which he points out that both liberals and conservatives share the same metaphors of the family as a nation and the government as a parent, but that they understand politics differently: from a liberal perspective, politics consists of helping those in need; from a conservative perspective, it consists of demanding discipline and autonomy. These views form what Lakoff considers to be models: the Nurturant Parent model and the Strict Father model, whose main ideas will be used in this analysis and are summarized in the following tables.

Table 1.

Summary Structure of the Nurturant Parent Model.

SUMMARY STRUCTURE OF THE NURTURANT PARENT MODEL		
MAIN METAPHORS OF MORALITY	THEMATIC SUBJECTS	CATEGORIZATION OF THE MORAL ACT
Morality as personal development	The world can be even better	Protecting those who cannot protect themselves
Morality as equitable distribution	The nation is a family (protecting and caring for each other)	Helping those who cannot help themselves
Morality as happiness	Love and respect	Promoting the fulfillment of life
Morality as empathy	Empathy	Empathetic behaviors and the promotion of equity
Morality as attention	The attention	Self-care and self-empowerment

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 2.

Summary structure of the Strict Father Model.

SUMMARY STRUCTURE OF THE STRICT FATHER MODEL		
MAIN METAPHORS OF MORALITY	THEMATIC SUBJECTS	CATEGORIZATION OF THE MORAL ACT
Moral order	Life is difficult (competitiveness)	Maintaining moral order
Moral strength	The world is dangerous	To protect legal entities from external evils
Moral authority	Respect for authority	Advocate Strict Father Morality
Moral limits	Discipline	Uphold the morality of reward and punishment
Moral essence	Autonomy	To advocate self-discipline, responsibility, and autonomy

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The Strict Father model (Table 2), whose basic assumptions point to an understanding of the world as competitive and dangerous, and to a family orientation around the values of obedience, discipline, autonomy, and respect for authority, is linked to

republican discourse. Lakoff states that "the worldview of conservatives revolves around the Strict Father model" (Lakoff, 2016, p. 59); while the Nurturant Parent model (Table 1), where the orientation towards a better future through protection and care is combined with the values of respect, love, empathy, and attention, is linked to Democratic discourse.

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this work is to carry out a comparative analysis of the political discourses and rhetoric used in the political and electoral debate by the two main presidential candidates of the United States for the 2024 elections: Kamala Harris, on behalf of the Democrats; Donald Trump, on behalf of the Republicans.

Thus, the discursive rhetoric of the two main presidential candidates —from the Democratic and Republican parties— will be examined using the models proposed by George Lakoff —the Nurturing Parent model and the Strict Father model—. The aim is to offer an assessment of how Kamala Harris and Donald Trump use their communication platforms to broaden their social support within the highly competitive electoral landscape, whether or not they align with Lakoff's theorized models.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study corpus refers to the complete transcript of the only election debate held on September 10, 2024 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, broadcast by ABC News and hosted by presenters Lindsey Davis and David Muir.

The study's methodology is primarily based on a qualitative approach, which includes a thorough review of the transcripts of both candidates' speeches during the televised debate. The analysis of these speeches employs Lakoff's theory, framed within cognitive science, which focuses on the study of different moral systems. Based on this theory, Lakoff proposes two distinct models for liberals and conservatives to "better understand worldviews and discursive forms" (Lakoff, 2016, p. 27).

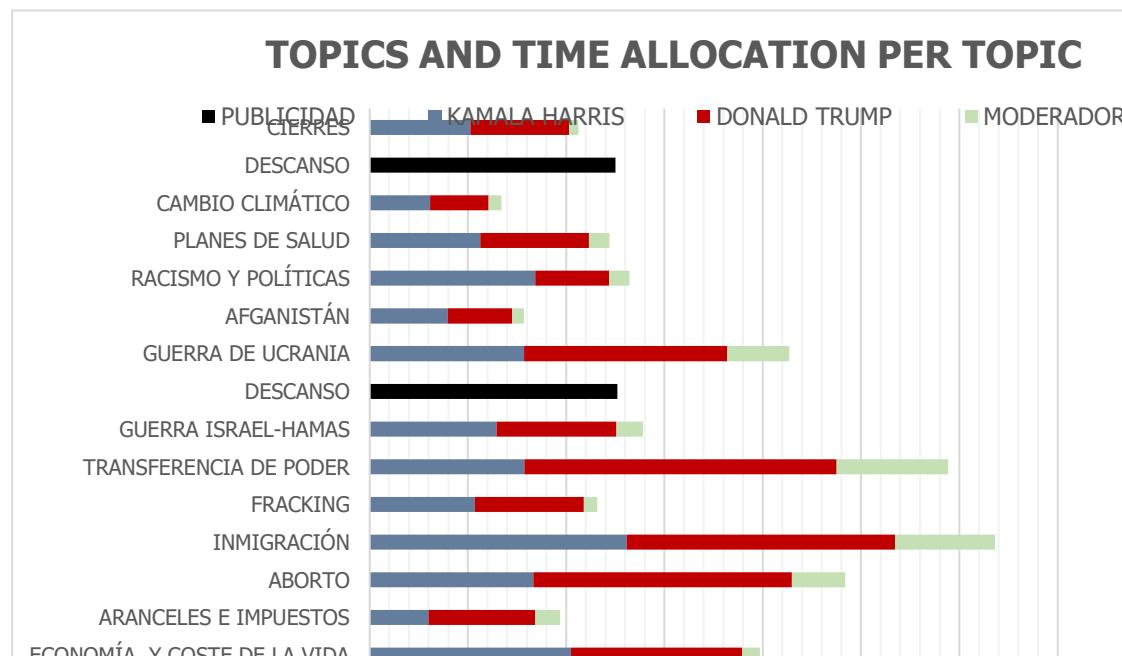
Specifically, the speeches of each candidate are analyzed using the Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models, focusing on their core themes. This allows for the identification of patterns, recurring themes, and the evolution of each candidate's rhetoric, and an assessment of whether or not it fits the model proposed by Lakoff (2016), while simultaneously evaluating each candidate's neurocommunication strategies.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before beginning the qualitative analysis of the speeches of both candidates, it is worth noting some quantitative data of interest regarding the study corpus.

Figure 1.

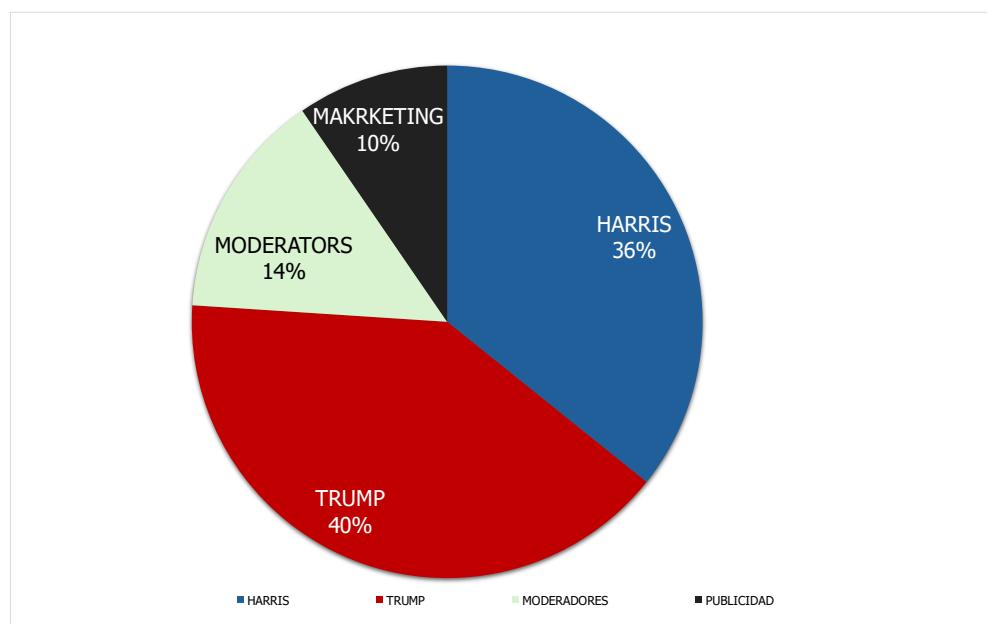
Topics and time allocation per topic.



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Figure 2.

Percentage of total word usage time.



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the topics that consumed the most debate time, and therefore generated the most interest and attention, were the economy, abortion, immigration, the transfer of power, and the war in Ukraine. Comparing Figure 1 and

Figure 2 reveals that, in terms of the topics covered in the debate and the allocation of speaking time, candidate Trump had an advantage in controlling the time, with his interventions totaling more than four minutes compared to his opponent.

Similarly, there is an uneven level of engagement depending on the topics being discussed. The Republican candidate has dominated the debates surrounding the economy, abortion, immigration, fracking, the transfer of power, and the war in Ukraine, in some cases using up to two minutes more than his opponent. The Democratic candidate, on the other hand, has out used her opponent in the debates concerning the war between Israel and Hamas, Afghanistan, racism, healthcare, and climate change, but in most of these cases, her margin is reduced to just a few seconds. As for the total number of words used during the debate, the Republican candidate surpasses his opponent by more than two thousand words.

This article will address the analysis of three interventions by the candidates: specifically, the beginning of the debate focused on economic issues (E), the intervention on immigration (I) and the closing of the debate with the analysis of the golden minutes (G).

4.1. Analysis of the democratic candidate from the perspective of the Nurturant Parent model

Following the drawing of lots to determine the speaking order, Kamala Harris opened the debate and Trump closed it. Analyzing Harris's speech using Lakoff's Careful Parent model reveals a reinforcement of the thematic subjects summarized in Table 1. Some examples follow.

The first intervention of the debate, focused on economic issues, came from Harris in response to a question about the cost of living and its evolution in recent years. From the outset, the Democratic candidate framed her speech within the Nurturant Parent framework, emphasizing the main thematic points, in some cases repeatedly (Table 3), while also including criticisms of her opponent from a liberal perspective, highlighting that his policies would make the world a better place, but only for "billionaires and big corporations", which denotes the Republican candidate's lack of empathy for middle-class families.

In her response to the question on immigration, candidate Harris maintains the same strategy of reinforcing the liberal framework (Table 3) and criticizing Trump from the liberal framework, emphasizing his lack of empathy—"the one thing you will not hear him talk about is you"—and that with him a better world, greater protection, or care will not be achieved—"the former president is someone who would prefer to run on a problem instead of fixing a problem"—. This strategy may yield little benefit in demobilizing conservative voters, as it is not framed within their thematic subjects. Furthermore, candidate Harris introduces a diversion from the immigration issue. She suggests viewers attend a Trump rally to see what he talks about (Hannibal Lecter, windmills that cause cancer, etc.). Once again, she seems to want to influence the conservative cognitive framework from within the liberal cognitive framework, which presupposes a possible reinforcement of the liberal framework without impacting the conservative one.

Finally, when analyzing the key moments of both candidates, one can observe the Democratic strategy of influencing their cognitive framework, but slipping into the conservative cognitive framework—"respecting our military and ensuring we have the most lethal fighting force in the "world"—, which reinforces the conservative thematic subject that the world is dangerous, while at the same time seeming to want to reinforce her own authority by recalling her long career, which began as a prosecutor, progressed to district attorney, rose to attorney general, then to senator and finally to vice president of the United States, without this implying a criticism from within the conservative framework, but rather its reinforcement.

Table 3.

Analysis of Kamala Harris's Discourse.

MODEL OF THE NURTURANT PARENT	
THEMATIC SUBJECTS	KAMALA HARRIS'S SPEECH
The world can be even better	<p>"I imagine and have actually a plan to build what I call an opportunity economy" (E)</p> <p>"I am offering what I describe as an opportunity economy and the best economists in our country, if not the world, have reviewed our relative plans for the future of America" (E)</p> <p>"What I intend to do is build on what we know are the aspirations and the hopes of the American people" (E)</p> <p>"fifteen hundred more border agents on the border to help those folks who are working there" (I)</p> <p>"It would have allowed us to stem the flow of fentanyl" (I)</p> <p>"more resources to allow us to prosecute transnational criminal organizations for trafficking in guns, drugs, and human beings" (I)</p> <p>"two very different visions for our country. One that is focused on the future" (G)</p> <p>"we can chart a new way forward" (G)</p> <p>"focus on what we can do over the next 10 and 20 years to build back up our country" (G)</p>
The nation is a family (protecting and caring for each other)	<p>"I intend on extending a tax cut for those families" (E)</p> <p>"My mother raised my sister and me, but there was a woman who helped raise us. We call her our second mother. She was a small business owner" (E)</p> <p>"what we have done is clean up Donald Trump's mess" (E)</p> <p>"the people of our country actually need a leader who engages in solutions" (I)</p> <p>"His former national security adviser has said he's dangerous and unfit. His former Secretary of Defense has said the nation, the Republic, would never survive another Trump term" (I)</p> <p>"what we can do around protecting seniors" (G)</p> <p>"what we can do together that is about sustaining America's</p>

	standing in the world" (G) "I intend to be a president for all Americans" (G)
Love and respect	"the American people want a president who understands the importance of bringing us together knowing we have so much more in common than what separates us" (E) "the American people know we all have so much more in common than what separates us" (G)
Empathy	"I believe in the ambition, the aspirations, the dreams of the American people" (E) "We know that young families need support to raise their children" (E) "I know there are so many families watching tonight who have been personally affected" (I) "understanding the aspirations, the dreams, the hopes, the ambition of the American people" (G)
The attention	"I am actually the only person on this stage who has a plan that is about lifting up the middle class and working people of America" (E) "I will be a president that will protect our fundamental rights and freedoms" (G) "I've only had one client, the people" (G) "the kind of president we need right now. Someone who cares about you" (G)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In her criticisms of her opponent, Harris focuses on demonstrating how Trump's policies contradict the moral values of the Nurturnat Parent model. This approach is assumed to resonate with voters within her own cognitive framework, but her criticisms fail to impact her opponent's cognitive framework and are therefore more likely to backfire. Regarding the cognitive frameworks proposed by Lakoff, as previously noted, Kamala Harris directs most of her rhetoric toward mobilizing her voters by appealing to the liberal cognitive framework while also making concessions to the conservative framework, without engaging in criticisms aligned with the Strict Parent model that could demobilize her voters or weaken her arguments.

4.2. Analysis of the republican candidate from the perspective of the Strict Father model

From the outset of his participation in the debate, candidate Trump employed rhetoric aligned with the conservative cognitive framework, repeatedly emphasizing the difficulties of daily life and the dangers of the world, while also asserting his authority by correcting the Democratic candidate (Table 4). In his criticisms of his opponent, in addition to influencing the conservative cognitive framework, he also managed to undermine the liberal thematic subjects —such as the notion that they would make

the world a better place or protect and care for the population by stating, "the people that she and Biden let into our country"; "they are destroying our country"— so her criticism could impact the liberal framework by questioning whether the candidate is truly adhering to the principles of her own political platform. This discursive strategy seems more aimed at sowing doubt and challenging Democratic arguments, weakening candidate Harris in the eyes of her electorate, than at reinforcing the conservative framework.

In the thematic block focused on the issue of immigration (I), Donald Trump's response initially addresses the Democratic candidate's diversion to the issue of rallies —Harris states that the public is abandoning Trump's rallies— but the Republican candidate shifts the emphasis of the criticism to his opponent —'People don't go to her rallies'; "she's busing them in and paying them to be there"— and to liberal moral values, insisting that the Democratic candidate cannot fulfill them—"if she becomes President, this country doesn't have a chance of success"—. With his vision of a future America as a "Venezuela on steroids," Trump intensifies the idea that the situation in the United States could be even more serious than that of Venezuela, emphasizing the idea that the world could be even worse, underscoring the danger that the Democratic candidate poses to the country. In this speech, Trump also reinforces conservative values and aligns them with popular sentiment. The hoax he slipped into this speech about immigrants in Springfield eating their pets, which was denied by the show's hosts, would make numerous headlines after the debate.

The Republican candidate's golden minute presents a series of criticisms of the liberal cognitive framework, attempting to show how the Democratic candidate fails to meet the expectations of the Nurturant Parent model, while undermining her authority —"she is going to do this, she is going to do that, she is going to do all these wonderful things. Why hasn't she done it?"— exercising a criticism that seems to want to influence the demobilization of the liberal vote, while reinforcing the conservative cognitive framework and its core themes.

Table 4.

Analysis of Donald Trump's speech.

MODEL OF THE STRICT FATHER	
THEMATIC SUBJECTS	DONALD TRUMP'S SPEECH
Life is difficult (competitiveness)	"We have inflation like very few people have ever seen before, probably the worst in our nation's history" (E) "many things are 50, 60, 70 and 80% higher than they were just a few years ago" (E) "they're coming in and they're taking jobs that are occupied right now by African-Americans and Hispanics and also unions" (E) "She's destroying this country and if she becomes president, this country doesn't have a chance of success. Not only success, we'll end up being Venezuela on steroids" (I) "They've had three and a half years to create jobs" (G) "We're being laughed at all over the world" (G)

	"We're not a leader. We don't have any idea what's going on" (G)
The world is dangerous	<p>"millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums" (E)</p> <p>"they're destroying our country. They're dangerous. They're at the highest level of criminality" (E)</p> <p>"you're going to end up in World War 3" (I)</p> <p>"In Springfield, they're eating the dogs, the people that came in, they're eating the cats, they're eating the pets" (I)</p> <p>"They've had three and a half years to fix the border" (G)</p> <p>"we have wars going on in the Middle East. We have wars going on with Russia and Ukraine" (G)</p> <p>"is allowing millions of people to come into our country, many of them are criminals and they're destroying our country" (G)</p>
Respect for authority	<p>"I have no sales tax. That's an incorrect statement. She knows that" (E)</p> <p>"Other countries are going to finally after 75 years, pay us back for all that we've done for the world" (E)</p> <p>"I will get that settled and fast. And I'll get the war with Ukraine and Russia ended. If I'm President-Elect, I'll get it done before even becoming president" (E)</p> <p>"I created one of the greatest economies in the history of our country. I'll do it again and even better" (E)</p> <p>"top professors think my plan is a brilliant plan" (E)</p> <p>"We have the biggest rallies, the most incredible rallies in the history of politics" (I)</p> <p>"they like what I say" (I)</p> <p>"I got more votes than any Republican in history by far. In fact, I got more votes than any president" (I)</p> <p>"I know the leaders very well. They're coming to see me" (G)</p>
Discipline	<p>"we have to get them out. We have to get them out fast" (E)</p> <p>"Our country is being lost. We're a failing nation" (I)</p> <p>"They did bad things or bad job. I fired them" (I)</p>
Autonomy	<p>"I took in billions and billions of dollars, as you know, from China" (E)</p> <p>"We did a phenomenal job with the pandemic" (E)</p> <p>"They want to make America great again" (I)</p> <p>"We can't sacrifice our country for the sake of bad vision" (G)</p> <p>"I rebuilt our entire military. She gave a lot of it away" (G)</p>

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Donald Trump's discourse during this televised debate thus unfolds around Lakoff's Strict Father model, constantly reinforcing its core themes. In his criticisms of his opponent, Trump questions Harris's lack of leadership, vision, and authority, accusing her of making life more difficult, the world more dangerous, and America more dependent. Furthermore, his speech repeatedly emphasizes the idea of a presidential candidate whose leadership cannot lead to a better world, which could impact on the liberal cognitive framework by questioning her perceived lack of empathy, attentiveness, care, and protection for citizens, thereby discouraging votes for the Democratic candidate.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the discursive rhetoric of presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the only televised debate on September 10, 2024, on ABC News, using the models proposed by George Lakoff, reveals how their communication strategies align with the frameworks theorized through the Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models. A detailed study of three key moments in the debate —the opening, closing, and the segment dedicated to immigration— reveals the core communication strategies that are replicated throughout the debate and demonstrates their discursive fit within the proposed models, showing how the candidates' argumentative and rhetorical lines conform to the thematic cores theorized by Lakoff.

Both candidates' speeches are geared toward a discursive strategy aimed at reinforcing their voters' cognitive frameworks, with repeated messages that resonate with the metaphorical fields of each model. Harris focuses much of her discourse on mobilizing the Democratic vote by reinforcing its cognitive framework, but her criticisms of Trump may not resonate with the conservative framework, as they appear to be framed within the liberal model. Trump crafts a discourse that reinforces the Strict Father model — particularly in some of its core themes— while his criticisms of Harris shift toward the core themes of the Nurturant Parent model, which could prove more effective.

This study of the presidential debate between candidate Harris and candidate Trump reveals the existence of opposing cognitive and ideological frameworks that shape contrasting perspectives. These perspectives also permeate aspects such as the use of space and nonverbal communication, the examination of which would complement this research⁷. Furthermore, it is necessary to reflect on the effectiveness and relevance of traditional analytical models today, in a context where appeals to emotions predominate alongside what Del Fresno (2019) calls "information problems". The impact of disinformation campaigns must be incorporated into the analysis of voting intentions within the context of increasing social polarization that fuels conflict dynamics.

The influence of these issues in the public sphere outlines the possible shift in the centrality of discourse in contemporary analyses, while foreshadowing the need for a critical perspective that shapes the development of this field of study and thus helps to better understand recurring phenomena such as the limited benefits of certain discourses that are still interpreted as winning.

Following the presidential debate on September 10, the national and international press largely declared Kamala Harris the winner. However, the US presidential election took place on November 5, 2024, in which the Republican candidate achieved a resounding victory over the Democratic candidate, thus becoming the next president of the United States.

⁷ In this sense, the entrance of both candidates onto the set already reveals the strategy followed in the subsequent live interaction, with constant evasiveness on the part of Donald Trump and a repeated search for contact on the part of Kamala Harris. This suggests the need for a more detailed analysis.

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