

**Representations of *Family* in Chicano English Narratives:
A Conceptual Metaphor Analysis**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	6
2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory.....	6
2.2 Cultural Linguistics.....	11
2.3 Familism.....	14
3. METHODOLOGY.....	16
3.1 Research Design, Data, and Analysis.....	16
3.2 Chicano Memoir Narrative as Data Source.....	16
3.3 Metaphor Identification and Categorization.....	18
4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....	19
4.1 Family Metaphors in Hoyt Street.....	19
4.2 Family Metaphors in Hunger of Memory.....	22
4.3 Cultural Cognition and Text Reality.....	28
5. DISCUSSION.....	29
6. CONCLUSION.....	31
7. REFERENCES.....	33

I. INTRODUCTION

Conceptual metaphor is a cognitive linguistic theory concerning the underlying representations said to be responsible for framing the comprehension of abstract concepts in human thought (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson posit that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, shaping conceptualizations of abstract notions in terms of concrete experiences in the physical world. With its ties to human cognition, conceptual metaphor is also a particularly useful cognitive linguistic tool in assessing cultural conceptualizations, the mental frameworks and cognitive processes shared by members of similar cultures. In the study at present, I am interested in assessing a particularly potent cultural conceptualization present in many families of Hispanic/Latinx origin. For this study, I chose a dataset that focuses on Chicano English autobiographical narratives in an attempt to fill a linguistically grounded research gap on the family-oriented experiences of Chicano culture. In the analysis of this research, I identify what conceptual metaphors co-occur in the linguistic data with cultural conceptualizations of high family value.

Hispanic/Latinx culture is popularly known to maintain family centered systems of authority. In this study I adopt the sociological term, familism, to refer to family-oriented cognitive frameworks. Familism, a cross-cultural characteristic, is most commonly attributed to (but is in no way limited to) members of Hispanic/Latinx communities. It highlights the shared cultural values of respect, loyalty, warmth, and duty toward family. With familism comes a belief that family relationships are of utmost importance to maintain. Psychological research posits that while characteristics of familism can be a source of pro-social behavior and well-being, it can also become a source of distress for some family members. Familism presents itself linguistically

through expressions of attitude toward family members and/or family membership. The interest of my study is to determine examples of lived experiences, positive or negative, in Chicano English narratives where familism is linguistically detectable in association with an overarching conceptual metaphor.

The direction of this study is guided by the following research questions: How is the notion of *family* metaphorically conceptualized in Chicano English autobiographical narratives and how do these metaphorical constructions interact with cultural conceptualizations of familism?

This study uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to back the argument that *family*, as a type of social group, is conceptualized in terms of physical structures with the conceptual metaphor: SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES. In this metaphor, the concept of membership in a social group is concretely expressed through our understanding of physical structures which have an interior and an exterior. An example of this metaphorical conceptualization is the expression, '**in** the family'. This conceptual metaphor is, of course, accessible to groups of language users beyond the cultural scope of this Chicano narrative study. I argue that the cultural conceptualization of familism expands this dominant conceptualization of family adding a value-based weight which defines the quality of one's family membership.

In this study, I position conceptual metaphor as a foundational tool to describe the cognitive frameworks present in the linguistic data. I then expand on this foundational analysis with an examination of cultural conceptualizations to fill the conceptual gaps not explained by CMT alone. This study does not aim to argue that there exists a conceptual framework unique and explicit to Chicano communities, but it instead seeks to emphasize the values of familism pervasive in Chicano English narrative storytelling through the use of metaphorical

conceptualizations. In this way, I conclude that CMT is valuable as an additional means of analysis in socio-cultural linguistic research.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980, introduces metaphor as pervasive in our everyday lives and as something more than a mere literary device. Moreover, they posit that our entire cognitive conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The conceptual system can be understood as the terms of which we think and act. Lakoff and Johnson argue that our concepts structure how we navigate the world around us and how we connect with others through reference to what we can perceive in observable reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). CMT acts as a pattern connection tool between subconscious conceptual systems and perceivable referents in the observable world through metaphorical mappings. It is language used at surface level which triggers these metaphors. In conceptual metaphor analysis, there are two core elements to a conceptual metaphor mapping; each is followed by descriptive examples. The first element, the **source domain**, is used as a concrete reference that structures the second element, the **target domain**, which represents the abstract concept of focus. To further illustrate this, linguistic examples of the conceptual metaphor, ARGUMENT IS WAR, are provided below; followed by the corresponding metaphor mapping.

- (1). All my arguments were *shot down*.
- (2). You *demolished* his argument.
- (3). He'll never *win* that argument.

Source Domain: WAR		Target Domain: ARGUMENT
Opposing sides/armies	⇒	Opposing argument participants
Making an attack	⇒	Objecting to argument
Defense	⇒	Maintaining one's opinion/argument
Surrender	⇒	Giving up opinion/argument

Studies have suggested near-universal metaphors such as TIME IS SPACE and HAPPY IS UP due to the shared human experience of embodiment, but metaphors can vary according to the context of local cultures (Kövecses, 2010). Conceptual metaphor frameworks can vary dialectically due to the context of culture behind dialectic variety. Marcus Callies and Alexander Onysko have developed cognitive sociolinguistic research on the role of conceptual metaphor in varieties of English, which had been a previously neglected field of research. Using corpus linguistic methods in their 2017 study, “Metaphor Variation in Englishes around the World”, the researchers posit that conceptualizations of emotions can differ within the grammatical and lexical choices of various regional and social groups (Callies & Onysko, 2017). In their investigation of ANGER metaphors, The Englishes spoken in Nigeria, Kenya, India, and Singapore were assessed using British English as a reference variety. All English varieties studied shared a preference for the conceptual metaphor, ANGER IS A PERSON, as the most frequently used anger conceptualization and ANGER IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, as the second most frequently used anger conceptualization. Differences in the preferred conceptualizations of anger surfaced amongst the English varieties beginning at the third most frequently used anger metaphors. At the level of third most frequently used anger metaphors, Nigerian English presented a preference for the metaphor, ANGER IS AN ILLNESS, Kenyan English: ANGER IS A

WEAPON, Indian English: ANGER IS A NATURAL FORCE , and Singaporean English displayed equal preference for the WEAPON, NATURAL FORCE, and ILLNESS source domains (Callies & Onysko, 2017). This work concludes that communities of speakers sharing a language variety using similar word choices and grammatical styles, are likely to share metaphorical conceptualizations of emotions with small amounts of variation. This connects with the present study as the conceptualization of focus, *family*, is a concept deeply entangled with emotional expression and intimacy. Data collected for this study represents Chicano English as encapsulating a cultural variety of Standard English. In this study, I anticipate the Chicano English narrative data to express similar metaphorical conceptualizations of family as would be found in Standard English.

To explore the boundaries of metaphor and culture, Zoltán Kövecses finds that in natural situations, metaphorical conceptualization occurs under the simultaneous pressure of embodiment and context in his 2010 study, “Metaphor and Culture”. Some conceptual metaphors appear to be universal across cultures due to the shared human experience of embodiment. Having a physical body equates to the human ability to collect physio-spatial information. Examples of this are the orientational conceptual metaphors, HEALTHY IS UP and SICK IS DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Being physically well means the body is up and moving autonomously while being ill means being restricted from the mobility perks of wellness. Furthermore, we often stay lying down when sick. While the embodiment necessary for physical orientation is an important source for many of the shared subconscious conceptual systems amongst humans, it is not the only type of source domain that influences conceptualization.

The interest of this present study is more concerned with the pressure of context on conceptualization (Kövecses, 2010; Mulsoff, 2017; Sharifian, 2017). Shaped by local culture,

context can depend on the setting and topic of a situation. Kövecses provides examples of how setting and topic influence the context of a conceptualization in his work. The following is an excerpt from a Hungarian newspaper passage translated by Kövecses himself, concerning the statement of the International Football Federation (FIFA) on the behavior of members of the Asian Football Association (AFC):

(4). I was bitterly disappointed by your behaviour at our Congress held in Los Angeles. You, as experts on football, should have known that the team that leaves the field before the game is called off by the referee can never win the game – states the letter. (Kövecses, 2010, p. 205)

Here, the behavior of the Asian representatives is conceptualized metaphorically. While not a formal example of conceptual metaphor, the FIFA president extends the rules of soccer metaphorically onto the social rules of behavior at a sports congress. What the FIFA president is trying to convey is his view that teams leaving a sports congress early is just as disrespectful as a team leaving a soccer game early. The conceptual metaphor used by the FIFA president has a target domain of the FIFA Congress and a source domain of soccer (football) itself. Only those who know the rules of a soccer game setting will understand the FIFA president's implications when using such terminology in a different setting. This example represents a context that is topic and setting specific for conceptualization. In the case of the present study, context is highly important for the conceptualization of family metaphors in Chicano English narratives. It is to this point, I make the argument that familism serves as the necessary context to conceptualize the topic of family in the Chicano English narratives utilized in this study. While the family conceptual metaphors found in this study are not as setting specific as example (4.), they are

topic specific to family, warranting the necessary explanation of familism to fully contextualize the weight of family representations in Hispanic/Latinx culture.

In his work, Kövecses also posits that the context of our metaphors may depend on our personal history, or long-lasting concerns and interests. He illustrates this point with a translated example from the Letters to the Editor section of a Hungarian newspaper concerning Hungary's joining of the European Union:

(5). We are, we can be at home in Europe. Since Saint Stephen we have been integrated/connected to this intellectual/spiritual electric circuit, and with varying degrees of intensity, but we have been in it – even though various powers, for more or less time, have tried to yank us out of it. (Kövecses, 2010, p. 206)

The author of this letter is an electrical engineer. This makes the conceptual metaphor, EUROPEAN UNION AS AN ELECTRIC CIRCUIT, a natural conceptualization based on personal history. In connection with the study at present, families in Hispanic/Latinx cultures are shaped by long-lasting values of warmth, connection, support, loyalty, and respect. The linguistic data in my study highlights the impact of shared family history in conjunction with the effort to maintain family values. While familism is a cross-cultural characteristic, how it appears in different families can greatly vary. Events in a family's history can impact a family member's attitude toward their family. This study examines expressions of attitude toward family as indicators of familism which further contextualize the family conceptual metaphors.

While these examples provided by Kövecses scrape the surface of context dependent conceptual metaphors as opposed to embodiment dependent conceptual metaphors, there is still much significance to the conceptual variation that exists within a culture. Kövecses makes the claim that languages come in varieties reflecting divergences in human experience (Kövecses,

2010, p. 209). He posits that dimensions of this variation include the social, regional, ethnic, style, subcultural, diachronic, and individual dimensions. The scope of the present study expands on the ethnic dimension by asserting the close-knit socialization and interaction amongst members of ethnic communities (e.g. Hispanic/Latinx) contributes to variation in the conceptualization of emotionally entangled topics, such as *family*.

Cultural metaphors can only be identified as cultural in nature because they rely on the shared conceptualizations of a group of people local to one another in some way. This sense of locality may characterize communities of speakers based on shared interests, beliefs, ethnicity, or nationality (Kövecses, 2010; Mulsoff, 2017; Sharifian, 2017).

2.2 Cultural Linguistics

The study of Cultural Linguistics has its origins in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and of course, linguistics. As studied by Farzad Sharifian in his article titled “Cultural Linguistics and Linguistic Relativity”, this multidisciplinary field is particularly concerned with the features of languages that encode culturally constructed conceptualizations of human experience (Sharifian, 2017). Cultural conceptualizations rely on the conceptual processes of cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. While the scope of the present study is focused on potential culturally influenced conceptual metaphors in Chicano narratives, cultural categories and cultural schemas are important to understand to better illustrate what is encoded within cultural conceptualizations. Sharifian uses the English of Aboriginal Australians as an example to describe cultural variation within cultural conceptualizations. That is to say, that varieties of a language (English in this example) operate based on cultural cognition which is formed as a result of interactions between individuals across time and space (Sharifian, 2017). Even speakers of the same language variety display variation in their access to cultural cognition.

While members of the same cultural community can share many characteristics of cultural cognition, variation is still a natural occurrence within cultural conceptualizations. To illustrate cultural variation within the usage of English, Sharifian studies the word 'family' in Aboriginal English, which evokes both cultural schemas and categories that characterize Aboriginal cultural experiences. Categories evoked by the Aboriginal English usage of 'family' surpass the Anglo-Australian cultural idea of a 'nuclear' family. Kinship terms such as 'brother' or 'cousin' are often used for other Aboriginal Australians who are in frequent contact with the speaker, it is not necessary that they be related to use such kinship terms. Within the same example of family kinship terms, cultural schemas are also evoked when certain rights and obligations between those involved are characterized (Sharifian, 2017).

Completing the description of the three conceptual processes, Sharifian provides an example of a cultural metaphor in Aboriginal English that has a fanciful and rhetorical interpretation in the Anglo-Australian perspective. Aboriginal Australians might say 'this land is me', which is informed by cultural conceptualizations that ancestor beings are part of the land and that the individual is a part of their ancestor beings. The combination of these beliefs result in the cultural conceptualization that the individual is naturally part of the land. This contrasts with the Anglo-Australian conceptualization that land is a possession and ascribes land with human-like qualities (Sharifian, 2017).

Cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors build up an important theoretical framework which defines Cultural Linguistics. The notion of cultural cognition integrates the two isolated topics, 'cognition' and 'culture', as they relate to language. Cognition defines the mental frameworks and thought processes which occur naturally in an individual. Culture defines the traditional beliefs of a group based on their shared experiences. Thus, cultural

cognition defines the mental frameworks natural for a cultural group sharing core beliefs and overlapping histories. Sharifian's work on Aboriginal English shows us that cultural cognition is dynamic in that it can be negotiated and renegotiated through contact with other speech communities and across generations (Sharifian, 2017). We observe an overlap between the example conceptualization of 'family' in the dominant culture, Anglo-Australia, and its culturally conceptualized implementation backed by schematization and categorization. In other words, the cultural cognition of Aboriginal Australians provides a different interpretation of 'family' than that of the Anglo-Australian dominant culture. This variation occurs due to the personification of land cultural schema and extended family cultural categories that are indexed to Aboriginal Australian cultural cognition. Building off of cultural schemas, we also observe the cultural metaphors of Aboriginal-Australians which are responsible for the conceptualization: LAND IS A HUMAN BEING. A common expression used by Aboriginal Australians illustrating this cultural metaphor is "this land is me". Speech referencing the land as an extension of the individual is typical of this cultural group. The cultural conceptualizations found within cultural cognition will not necessarily be shared by every member of a particular speech community. Some Aboriginal-Australians may carry more of the Anglo-Australian conceptualizations or vice versa depending on their linguistic interactions. Cultural cognition does not posit that members outside of a particular speech community are excluded from shared cultural conceptualizations (Kövecses, 2010; Mulsoff, 2017; Sharifian, 2017). What is observed in Sharifian's work, relevant to the present study, is an example of culturally influenced conceptualization regarding the immediate environments and relationships of communities of speakers.

Andreas Musolff defines "culture" linguistically in his 2017 paper, "Metaphor and Cultural Cognition". In his definition, culture, in its simplest linguistic form, is a noun

representing a dynamic, variable form of communicative action that presents itself in socio-historically embedded situations (Musolff, 2017). Musolff focuses on the culture-specific interpretation of collective identities constructed through conceptual metaphor. His study is particularly centered on conceptualizations of national identities. Using elicited survey data of participants from 10 countries, cross-cultural results revealed similar variations of the metaphor, NATION AS A BODY. Variations of this metaphor used throughout the data included NATION AS GEOBODY, AS FUNCTIONAL WHOLE, AS PART OF SELF, and AS PART OF GLOBAL STRUCTURE. These results highlight the claim that language speakers need not be part of the same community (e.g. nation) to share metaphorical conceptualizations. Mulsoff's study also revealed a unique cultural conceptualization within the Chinese data. Chinese cultural conceptualizations of the metaphor, NATION AS PERSON, displayed a marked preference for 'mother' personifications of China in historical and contemporary discourse. Mulsoff's work observes culture-specific metaphorical conceptualizations under the assumption that a shared sociological history is greatly relevant to the manifestation of cultural conceptualizations within the shared language of that community of speakers (Mulsoff, 2017).

2.3 Familism

Sociologists coined the term *familism* to describe a set of cultural values which highlight support, respect, closeness, loyalty, and obligation toward family. Familism is most commonly observed within Hispanic/Latinx communities (Rea-Sandin & Wilson, 2025; Campos et al., 2014). At this point, it is important to note that this paper does not make the argument that these family metaphors are only available to members of Chicano or other Hispanic/Latinx cultural communities. Family metaphors in Chicano memoir narratives, occur alongside broader conceptualizations of life and intimacy which are accessible to and are commonly used by

speech communities beyond the one of focus. What this research study aims to emphasize is the significance of family associated metaphors within Chicano memoir narratives that reaffirm (a.) the presence of familism within these works and (b.) the connection between family and identity as associated with this particular cultural group. While familism has commonly described the ideal family relationship as warm, close, and supportive, it also insinuates that family should be prioritized over self. In a study on familism and its effects on psychological health, psychologists point out a link between familism and prosocial behavior, as well as a link between familism and distress (Campos et al., 2014).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design, Data, and Analysis

This study is qualitative in nature as the analysis is centered on language about family structure and the metaphors that underpin these models within two selected Chicano narratives, drawing additional support from socio-cultural linguistic positions. The Chicano narratives used as data sources in this project are *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography* by Mary Helen Ponce, published in 2006 and *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* by Richard Rodriguez, published in 1983. The following is a list of criteria for data selection: non-fiction memoir narrative writing style, Chicano/a identifying authors of Mexican-American heritage, References themes of early family life, and preserves Chicano English within the narration.

3.2 Chicano Memoir Narrative as Data Source

In Aneta Pavlenko's 2007 study, "Autobiographic Narratives as Data in Applied Linguistics", narrative form is described as one of the most popular ways people attribute meaning to their life over time (Pavlenko, 2007). The present study is largely concerned with the cultural identity of Chicano English speakers from a socio-cultural linguistic standpoint. Autobiographical narratives are an ideal data source for this project since they offer insight into the author's private world and highlight connections between lived experience and established personal values. While Pavlenko's work centers on the autobiographical narratives of L2 English learners to uncover their opinions about the learning process, this study seeks to extend the analysis of narrative data to account for conceptual metaphor in an attempt to reveal underlying cultural conceptualizations regarding the idea of family.

In the same work, Pavlenko defines three interconnected types of information, subject reality, life reality, and text reality all of which can be analyzed in autobiographical narratives (Pavlenko, 2007). In this research study, I adopt Pavlenko's autobiographical terms, subject reality, life reality, and text reality to provide a buffer between the narrative analysis and the cultural cognitive analysis of my dataset. I will address and illustrate the first two types of information, in the context of Chicano culture, from a socio-cultural linguistic standpoint. Subject reality is centered on the narrator's experience and life reality is centered on what actually occurred externally from the narrator. In Pavlenko's study, subject reality was assessed as a preliminary analysis measure, taking into account the L2 English learners' feelings and beliefs regarding their learning progress. In Pavlenko's assessment of life reality, the L2 English learner's diaries were manually scanned for repeated events and commonalities in the learners' experiences that reinforced their subject reality. Pavlenko illustrates text reality as the linguistic features (e.g. schemas, cultural conceptualizations, conceptual metaphors) L2 learners use to position the narrative according to their experience. In my adaptation of Pavlenko's terminology, text reality accounts for linguistic expressions of the schemas and conceptualizations being drawn from. In the study at present, I will assess text reality (Linguistic features the narrator uses to describe events) through the analysis of conceptual metaphors from a cognitive linguistic standpoint (Pavlenko, 2007). While this information is not directly connected to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the usage of autobiographical narrative as the primary dataset provides a challenge for conceptual metaphor analysis. Autobiographies do not focus on extended descriptions of single events in time. Limited description means limited linguistic data on a single topic of focus. I chose to continue this study with autobiographies as the main data source due to a lack of research on Chicano autobiographies. With family as a highlighted feature of

Chicano culture, I anticipate enough linguistic data to determine a few conceptual metaphors representing family in the Chicano autobiographies. An alternative means of analytical description for autobiography data in particular should fill in holes of explanation not covered by CMT.

In a 1988 study titled, “The Recovery of Chicano Nineteenth-Century Autobiography”, Genaro Padilla strongly advocates for an increased study of autobiography in Chicano culture. While rich in socio-cultural history, Chicano autobiographies have been greatly dispersed and some have been forgotten over time. Padilla highlights the individual and communal disjuncture present in the life histories of Chicano autobiographies (Padilla, 1988). Insights from Padilla’s article lead my present study to the claim that Chicano autobiographies are a good source of data to unpack cultural cognition associated with the topic of family because they cover the history of the narrators over time.

3.3 Metaphor Identification and Categorization

Text samples from the data sources that reference *family* have been manually collected for conceptual metaphor analysis. Rather than merely scanning for poetic metaphorical language, the text is scanned for potential thought shaping conceptualizations regarding family. Sections of the data where early family life and family member roles are the topics of narration were closely examined and categorized according to their respective source domains. The two narratives are analyzed separately and reviewed conjointly for possible influence from established cultural values of familism.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Family Metaphors in *Hoyt Street*

In my conceptual metaphor analysis of this autobiography narrative, the data revealed the overarching family conceptual metaphor to be: SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES. In this conceptualization, family is referred to as a type of social group and is linguistically described as having similar qualities to those of physical structures. The qualities of physical structures making up this source domain only rely on the necessity that physical structures maintain an interior and an exterior. While physical structures have qualities that expand far beyond those used in the conceptual metaphor, the only qualities required for comprehension of the metaphor are the senses that physical structures have an inside and an outside. Family, as a type of social group, comes with the inherent conceptualization of membership as being ‘in’ the group and non-membership as being ‘outside’ of the group.

(6.) “Not only did the women **in my family** write alike, we all spoke in the same moderate voice.” (Ponce, 2006, p.16)

(7.) “**In our family** it was said that artistic abilities came from the Solís side, intellect was the Ponces.” (Ponce, 2006, p. 27)

(8.) “Of all the girls **in our family**, only Ronnie had a big wedding; apart from working at a factory job, that was all a Mexican girl could aspire to at the time.” (Ponce, 2006, p.28)

SD: PHYSICAL STRUCTURES		TD: SOCIAL GROUPS
Interior	⇒	membership

Exterior	⇒	non-membership
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SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES is the only conceptual metaphor used to describe family in Mary Helen Ponce's autobiography. Her writing style is fast paced and focuses on literal descriptions of events that occurred in her lifetime. While I found no other conceptual metaphors in reference to family in this autobiography, I discovered that there were many examples of the familism cultural schema in Ponce's descriptions of (a.) the individual expectations of each family member and (b.) in the descriptions of her attitude toward her family. In Mary Helen Ponce's writing, family is most often described in terms of each family member's role and contributions.

(9). "Ours was a well organized household. Because we were a large family and our parents liked to keep us busy and out of trouble, we were each allocated jobs according to our size and capabilities. Grumbling but respectful, we went about our work, intent on pleasing our parents, whose concern with cleanliness and order were evident in everything they did." (Ponce, 2006, p. 37)

(10). "Nora acquired a taste for good hardwood furniture[...]. One piece at a time, paid for in cash, Nora bought most of what sat in our living room[...]. I found it admirable that Nora did not spend all her hard-earned money on herself. Girls her age often spent their earnings on clothes, makeup, and ankle-strap shoes." (Ponce, 2006, p. 19)

(11). "[Elizabet] was cheerful and industrious, and just as Nora did, loved our mother deeply. She emulated her in all things, never talked back, and was always willing to do more than her share of the housework. Elizabet was my mother's right hand, a girl who helped with both the easy and the hard chores. She cooked, cleaned, ironed. Anything and everything to earn our mother's favor." (Ponce, 2006, p. 20)

(12). “And then Elizabet fell from grace; she eloped with R., a handsome young man who wore a snappy uniform[...]. I never got the details about Elizabet’s dash to the altar, but I recall that my parents were disappointed and hurt. Up to that time, she had done no wrong.” (Ponce, 2006, p. 22).

The above examples present the attitudes Ponce had in mind at the time of her family members and their expected contributions. Example (9) indicates the parental respect required to properly carry out household expectations. Although the children grumble about their tasks, they remain respectful to their parents and maintain a priority of pleasing them over the alternative of pleasing themselves. In Example (10) Mary Helen Ponce holds an attitude of admiration towards her older sister Nora because of her generosity and selflessness. The connection to familism in both examples aligns with a sense of obligation to the family and a willingness to subordinate individual preferences for the benefit of the family (Campos et al., 2014). While not connected to the dominant conceptual metaphor, these excerpts serve as examples of the familism cultural schema and further conceptualize the weight of duty to maintain a good standing in one’s own family.

Example (11) goes a few steps farther in the connection to familism with a value for interconnectedness among family members, especially with their mother, and shows how Ponce’s older sister, Elizabet, manages her own behavior to maintain family honor (Campos et al., 2014). From this example we can see a hierarchy is established in accordance with how well family members uphold the cultural values of familism. When values of generosity, respect, intimacy, and obligation are not properly upheld, that family member risks losing the respect of others in the family unit as expressed in example (12). The content of this example violates cultural values of taking family into account when making important decisions, managing

behavior to maintain family honor, willingly subordinating preferences for the benefit of the family, and regarding family as a first source of emotional support (Campos et al., 2014). The examples of the familism cultural schema only partially encapsulates the complexity of family relationships of this Chicano memoir narrative. While it does cover aspects of duty, hierarchy, growth, and consequences, it still fails to account for the deeply personal connections and commitments that exist between family members due to the nature of Ponce's fast paced and literal writing style.

4.2 Family Metaphors in *Hunger of Memory*

The family metaphor uncovered in this autobiographical narrative, works in tandem with conceptualizations of life, intimacy, and relationships. While the family structure metaphor, in many of the examples, can stand apart from cultural schemas, some examples express them together where closeness between family members is held in high regard (Rea-Sandin & Wilson, 2025; Campos et al., 2014). The dominant family metaphor is the same as that of Mary Helen Ponce's autobiography: SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES. Phrases of the conceptual metaphor are shown in bold and phrases connected to the familism cultural schema are underlined in the examples below:

(13). "A family member would say something to me and I would feel myself specially recognized. My parents would say something to me and I would feel embraced by the sounds of their words. Those sounds said: *I am speaking with ease in Spanish. I am addressing you in words I never use with los gringos. I recognize you as someone special, close, like no one outside. You belong with us. In the family*" (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 15)

(14). "Once more inside the house I would resume (assume) my place in the family." (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 16).

SD: PHYSICAL STRUCTURES		TD: SOCIAL GROUPS
interior	⇒	membership
exterior	⇒	non-membership

This conceptualization provides a map to visualize the idea of family in physical-spacial terms. It also illuminates family life as a private affair by the separation of interior and exterior qualities of the source domain. While this representation of family is not restricted to Chicano culture, the familism cultural schema found in Richard Rodriguez's narrative appears most when the SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES metaphor is evoked alongside conceptualizations of family intimacy and family life.

Rodriguez's narrative incorporates the familism cultural schema within the same excerpts as the dominant conceptual metaphor. In example (13) we see the interpreted attitude of Rodriguez's family members when they communicate with him in Spanish. He feels specially recognized by his family members simply for being a member of the family. This coincides with one of the defining characteristics of familism, valuing interconnectedness among family members (Campos et al., 2014).

Deepening the source domain quality of being 'in' the family, example (14) indicates that membership of the familial social group is a continuous fulfillment of an expected role. This coincides with an inherent sense of obligation to family characterized by the familism cultural schema (Campos et al., 2014). This inference expands upon the dominant American cultural conceptualization of an individualistic 'nuclear' family. Obligations toward family are not inferred by the dominant metaphor: SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES. Rather, it is the familism cultural schema which encodes this inference.

The dominant family metaphor is used in conjunction with other metaphorical conceptualizations, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, and RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL BONDS, to describe how family members interact with one another within the family unit and how they interact as a unit with the outside world (e.g. with members of other cultures). The metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, is referenced to describe how the family adapts and adjusts their approaches according to life circumstances.

(15). “My parents were always **behind** me. They made success possible. They **evened the path**. They sent their children to parochial schools because the nuns ‘teach better’. They paid a tuition they couldn’t afford. They spoke English to us. For their children my parents wanted chances they never had—an easier way.” (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 56)

SD: JOURNEY		TD: LIFE
Traveller	⇒	Person living
Destination	⇒	Purpose
Distance Travelled	⇒	Progress made
Movement down a path	⇒	Acts made to achieve purpose
Obstacles/ blockages	⇒	Challenges
Travel guide	⇒	Parents

Unlike the content of *Hoyt Street*, Rodriguez’s writing in *Hunger of Memory* is not primarily centered on familial roles, but instead focuses on the life set up for him by his parents and the levels of intimacy shared amongst family members. To describe how parental figures establish security for their family unit.

This example describes the progress of parental figures in overcoming challenges for their children by means of a journey elaboration. While the parents in this example, moved

independently from their children while ‘evening out the path’, their work is tied to their role as parents in the family social group, and they effectively provided a starting point in life’s journey for the children who assumed their roles, after the path was evened out. A child only needs to be recognized as a child, son, or daughter to assume their role. There is also something to the point of his parents being ‘behind’ him in the journey. This indicates that once the children began growing up, they no longer needed to metaphorically follow behind their parents to make their way through life but instead they now lead the way with the authority of education and the parents follow behind for support.

Example (15) also indicates that life is a rough journey for immigrant parents but the familism cultural schema encodes parental values of obligation to create a workable starting point for their children to progress even further down life’s path. This sense of obligation to family is active due to the familism cultural schema characteristics of taking family into account when making important decisions, managing behavior to maintain family honor, and willingly subordinating individual preferences for the benefit of the family (Campos et al., 2014).

To get a closer look at how family members interact with one another in accordance with the familism cultural schema, we will need to further break down the relevant intimacy metaphors referenced in *Hunger of Memory*. The first of these metaphors is INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL PROXIMITY.

(16). “Mine was a childhood of **intense family closeness**. And extreme public alienation.” (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 1)

(17). “They seemed to think Spanish was the only language we could use, that Spanish alone permitted our **close association**[...]. I felt I had somehow committed a sin of betrayal by learning English[...]. I felt that I had shattered the intimate bond that had once held the family **close**.” (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 30)

(18). “I went to the nine o’clock mass every Sunday with my family. At that time in my life, when I was so struck by diminished family closeness and the necessity of public life, church was a place unlike any other. (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 52)

(19). “More acute was [mom’s] complaint that the family wasn’t **close** anymore, like some others she knew. **Why weren’t we close**, ‘more in the Mexican style’? Everyone is so private, she added.” (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 60)

SD: PHYSICAL PROXIMITY		TD: INTIMACY
nearer	⇒	Greater/stronger intimacy
farther	⇒	Less/weaker intimacy

Each example refers to family intimacy using physical proximity as the means of linguistic description. In other words, the underlying cognitive conceptualization of intimacy is mapped from the embodied conceptualization of physical proximity. In comprehending the target domain, intimacy, we use our understanding that physical objects can be close or far from one another as a mapping of conceptualization. This conceptual metaphor, of course, exists beyond the scope of this study but is unquestionably connected to the familism cultural schema in the examples above.

The content of examples (17) and (18) show an attitude of despair surrounding the loss of family intimacy through the conceptualization of a spatial separation in close proximity. While an attitude of despair evoked by a loss of family intimacy can be attributed to many more than just Hispanic/Latinx cultures, there is still an observable alignment between the expressions of attitude and characteristics of the familism cultural schema through the prioritized valuing of interconnectedness among family members (Campos et al., 2014; Kövecses, 2010). When Rodriguez’s family members project that Spanish is the only way to maintain family closeness,

Rodriguez is overcome with despair because he believes he betrayed his family by learning English. When the ability to communicate with family members is diminished by a language barrier, family members lose the capacity to turn to and consult one another for emotional support and mutual understanding (Campos et al., 2014). The second intimacy metaphor, RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL BONDS comes to a similar analysis.

(20). “I felt that I had **shattered the intimate bond** that had once held the family close.”

(Rodriguez, 1983, p. 30)

(21). “From the very first days, through the years following. It will be with his parents—the figures of lost authority, the persons toward whom he feels deepest love—that the change will be most powerfully measured. A **separation will unravel between them.**” (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 51)

SD: PHYSICAL BONDS		TD: RELATIONSHIPS
united	⇒	Mutually strong; intimately connected
separated	⇒	Weak, estranged connection

The target domain, relationships, is cognitively conceptualized in the same way we comprehend the quality of physical bonds either being united or separated. Our embodied knowledge provides that a bond is not a bond if it is not united. Once separated, the new conceptualization posits that what used to be a bond is no longer. Mapping these qualities from the source domain of physical bonds, the target domain receives two potential qualities: a strong, intimately connected relationship or a weak, estranged relationship. Characteristics of the familism cultural schema prioritize the maintenance of strong family relationships. As shown in examples (20) and (21), when separation comes between the interconnectedness among family

members, the values of familism are perceived as not being properly upheld and disappointment from disconnected family members can result.

These additional conceptual metaphors do not always occur with the dominant conceptual metaphor SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES within the data. Rather, they conceptualize the standard of quality for family interconnectedness as well as what it takes to maintain a good standing 'in' the family structure. These are highly important features of the familism cultural schema.

4.3 Cultural Cognition and Text Reality

Close families are a cultural staple of Hispanic/Latinx identity due to values of familism. The cultural cognition of these communities may influence family members to worry or become angered when core values are perceived not to be of significance to other members of the community. Values associated with familism and linguistic constructions to express them are examples of cultural conceptualizations that impact the thoughts and actions of members of Hispanic/Latinx communities (Campos et al., 2014; Kövecses, 2010; Musolff, 2017; Rea-Sandin & Wilson, 2025).

In the analysis of an autobiography, conceptual metaphors and cultural schemata constitute text reality, the linguistic features used by the narrator to describe events (Pavlenko, 2007). It is this type of information that is most useful in a cognitive linguistic assessment because the language used to describe family events and memories are rich in metaphorical conceptualizations potentially influenced by culture (Kövecses, 2010; Mulsoff, 2017; Sharifian, 2017).

V. DISCUSSION

By adopting Pavlenko's autobiography analysis terminology, the information I gained from these narratives can be reviewed sociolinguistically for cultural cognition to further expand on the conceptual metaphor analysis. Subject reality, the feelings and cultural schema within the Chicano narratives chosen for this study, illustrate what the narrators' experienced (Pavlenko, 2007). Mary Helen Ponce in her narrative, *Hoyt Street*, experienced a childhood of family closeness and enjoyment in dutiful obligation. Ponce's narrative on her early family life paints the picture of a daughter who is discovering her sense of identity in response to the ways older family members behave around her and with each other as influenced by cultural values. Further research is required to compare the family metaphors evoked in Chicano narratives as potentially influenced by gendered experience. The focus on family member roles in Ponce's narrative contrasts with Richard Rodriguez's focus on the private and intimate nature of his Chicano family. Rodriguez in his narrative, *Hunger of Memory*, experienced a childhood of separation from other cultures and his own family members due to a language barrier. The narration of his early life paints a picture of immense sadness due to a perceived loss in intimacy with his family members.

Life reality, the recurring events that solidify subject reality (i.e. the narrators' experiences) in the selected narratives, is centered on what actually occurred externally from the narrators (Pavlenko, 2007). Mary Helen Ponce's narration on early family life was centered in the home. The experiences external to Ponce that her narration picks up is the significance and level of importance her parents maintained in the cultural value of contributing to the family. On the other hand, Richard Rodriguez's narration of early family life was split between the intimacy

felt at home and the alienation felt in public. Rodriguez's narration picks up on the external experience of language barriers between him and his parents that limited the sense of family closeness. Losing family closeness is of course troubling for a cultural system that highly values interconnectedness between family members and can cause distress for family members who make a point to uphold the cultural values associated with familism (Campos et al., 2014).

It is within the narrative explanations and figurative language indexing a family member's attitude towards their family that cultural schemas are encoded. Conceptual Metaphor Theory alone has shown to only provide a surface level cognitive analysis of family representations. What has been covered in the analysis is that family is a type of social group and is conceptualized in terms of physical structures. The physical structure source domain only accounts for the quality of either membership or non-membership in the group. Given that we know Hispanic/Latinx culture maintains a cultural cognition that views family as much more than a mere social group, other features of language are informative to the analysis of this cultural conceptualization. Figurative language encodes the presumptions about family held by the narrators which illuminate the familism cultural schema.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present research study has implemented conceptual metaphor analysis on Chicano autobiographical narratives to argue that values of familism are linked to the cultural conceptualizations of family within thought and action. Further research is required for additional support of this claim using a larger dataset and potentially comparing the early family life narratives of gendered experiences and other cultural groups. A deeper theoretical concentration on the psychology of familism and its impact on cognition would also greatly benefit the results of this project. Another potential branch of study from this project that would yield socially accurate results is a change in data source from narratives to social media posts, interviews, or responses from elicited surveys.

The topic of this study utilizes defined characteristics of familism to map the cultural conceptualizations present in members of Hispanic/Latinx communities when recounting their personal family experiences in narrative form.

This research study has addressed and responded to the following initial research questions: How is the notion of *family* metaphorically conceptualized in Chicano memoir narratives and how do these metaphorical constructions reflect the Chicano cultural conceptualization of familism? Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Cultural Linguistics as a theoretical basis, analysis revealed that *family*, in its most basic form, is conceptualized with the conceptual metaphor, SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES, in Mary Helen Ponce's autobiography narrative, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography* and in Richard Rodriguez's autobiography narrative, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. Text data sourced from Richard Rodriguez's narrative revealed an

interdependence on supporting conceptual metaphors that are, like the dominant metaphor, not unique to Chicano cultural cognition: LIFE IS A JOURNEY, INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, and RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL BONDS. These supporting metaphors in conjunction with figurative expressions of subject and life reality feed the Hispanic/Latinx cultural conceptualization of familism. While conceptual metaphor analysis alone on the autobiographies is not sufficient to support a connection to the familism cultural schema, it does provide a baseline conceptual framework in which the figurative expressions expand on. Further research with a larger dataset is required to solidify the results of this study.

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