Analyzing Metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's "Euphoria" through Conceptual Metaphor Theory

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and categorize the use of metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's song lyrics "Euphoria" using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) approach. This song was chosen because it is a diss track filled with conceptual metaphors that not only serve as linguistic decoration, but also as a rhetorical strategy to build self-image, put down opponents, and reveal cultural dynamics in contemporary hip-hop. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with data in the form of the lyrics to the song "Euphoria," obtained through transcription documentation from reliable online sources. The analysis was conducted by categorizing and identifying metaphors based on the three main categories of CMT; structural metaphor, ontological metaphor, and orientational metaphor. Through this study, the results of the study show that Kendrick Lamar uses metaphors as a conceptual tool to express power, authenticity, moral conflict, and cultural identity. This study highlights that metaphors in rap are not merely figurative expressions, but also highly strategic ideological tools, making it crucial to analyze them within the context of modern cultural discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Song lyrics play an important role in conveying messages, emotions, and personal experiences. They are not only written to follow rhythm, but also to express ideas and feelings that reflect real-life situations. Anisa et al. (2024) stated that song was used as a form of communication with other people, to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and other emotions. Moreover, song lyrics are formed through conversational speech, rhythms, and poetic expressions.

Beyond rhythm and melody, the words within songs carry layered meanings that often require interpretation (Stefanović, 2025). Among the many linguistic devices used in song, metaphor stands out as one of the most

significant tools for shaping meaning. A metaphor does not simply decorate a lyric; it transforms abstract feelings into tangible images, allowing listeners to experience emotions in vivid and relatable ways (Skalka, 2024).

In popular songs, metaphors can act as a bridge between the personal experiences of the artist and the collective understanding of the audience (Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023). This is in line with Hanim & Nurdin (2023), view that song lyrics often represent the lives of listeners because song themes are related to human experiences. Therefore, this makes the study of metaphor essential, because it highlights how musicians transform personal stories and conflicts into symbols that resonate across wider cultural landscapes.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980) define metaphor is a cognitive and linguistic device in which one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another, allowing abstract ideas to be expressed through more concrete experiences. In song lyrics, metaphors can be seen as expressive tools that enable musicians to transform personal experiences into symbolic representations that carry broader cultural meanings. A metaphor is the description of one concept using the vocabulary of another. As explained by Ersyadi et al. (2018) metaphor is a figurative expression that treats the tenor and the vehicle as if they were identical, allowing abstract ideas to be understood through concrete representations. More than rhetorical device, metaphor function as systematic mappings between different domains of experience, allowing abstract concepts to be understood through more concrete and familiar experiences (Hicke & Kristensen-mclachlan, 2024).

Within the genre of hip-hop and rap, metaphors take on an even more central role. Rap is often described as a competitive and performative form of art where artists showcase verbal dexterity, craft identities, and challenge others through lyrical battles (Stefanović, 2025). In this context, metaphors become weapons of language: they reinforce self-confidence, belittle opponents, and convey social critique all at once. Unlike straightforward descriptions, metaphors compress complex social realities into striking and memorable phrases (Rahmadhanti et al., 2022). For example, rappers frequently use metaphors of war, sport, or dominance to position themselves as superior in a competitive field. Thus, analyzing metaphors in rap lyrics allows us to see how language is used to perform identity, resist authority, and claim legitimacy in a highly competitive industry.

However, one problem that often arises in studies of song lyrics is that they remain on the surface level, focusing only on identifying metaphors without exploring their deeper rhetorical functions. In many cases, metaphors are listed but not examined in relation to their purpose within the broader text, their contribution to the flow of the lyrics, or their social implications (Tyutyunnik et al., 2024).

This limitation is especially evident when analyzing diss tracks, where the choice of metaphor is rarely accidental but carefully crafted to attack an opponent and reinforce the artist's persona. A diss track is not simply a personal attack but a performance of power in front of a global audience, and metaphors are the sharpest tools used to achieve this (Stefanović, 2025).

Before delving into a specific case, it is crucial to note that the relationship between metaphor and musical expression varies widely amongst artists and genres. Each performer reflect the particular of linguistic innovation and cultural background, influencing how metaphors are employed to establish meaning and identity. Some artists use metaphors to portray vulnerability or emotion, while others use metaphors as rhetorical devices or emblems of authority. Understanding these variations serves as a solid foundation for investigating how musicians like Kendrick Lamar use metaphors to convey complicated concepts, emotions, and social commentary through the music.

Kendrick Lamar is an American hip-hop artist, rapper, song writer, record producer and widely considered one of the most influential rappers of his generation, Lamar has been praised for his ability to merge poetic language with social commentary. Kendrick Lamar provides an important case study in this regard. His previous works, such as To Pimp a Butterfly and Damn., have been studied for their rich use of imagery, symbolism, and metaphor, all of which address complex issues of race, politics, and identity in America (Tyutyunnik et al., 2024).

For this reason, scholars and critics alike frequently return to his songs as cultural documents that illuminate how language and song intersect to shape public discourse. His artistry provides fertile ground for examining how metaphors are not only aesthetically pleasing but also politically and socially meaningful.

The song *"Euphoria"*, released in 2024, is a striking example of how Kendrick Lamar uses metaphors strategically within the form of a diss track. The song is widely recognized as a direct response to fellow rapper Drake, with whom Kendrick Lamar engaged in a highly publicized lyrical feud. Rather than relying only on insults, Kendrick Lamar crafts elaborate metaphors that portray his opponent as weak, artificial, or unworthy of respect. In this way, *"Euphoria"* operates on multiple levels: as a work of music with rhythmic complexity, as a public confrontation in the tradition of rap battles, and as a rhetorical performance in which metaphors play the leading role.

The cultural impact of the song shows that metaphors are not just linguistic flourishes but instruments of persuasion, identity construction, and cultural positioning within the global hip-hop industry (Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023). This song was chosen for analysis because it uses metaphors in a deep and meaningful way that goes beyond what is immediately obvious. This fits with the study's goal to look into the deeper styles and ways of expression used in the song. Compared to other songs that are only briefly mentioned, this one shows a more complicated use of metaphor that highlights important social and cultural issues. That is why it is a great choice for a detailed metaphor analysis.

To analyze these elements effectively, this study applies what can be called Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). This theory, first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explains how metaphors shape human thought by mapping abstract concepts onto concrete experiences (Gulfam et al., 2022). In this framework, metaphors shape how individuals think, reason, and interpret abstract ideas by mapping them onto concrete, physical experiences. CMT explains that human cognition relies on conceptual domains, where a source domain (something familiar and tangible) is used to structure understanding of a target domain (something abstract or complex).

Through this mapping process, abstract concepts such as emotions, power, identity, or conflict become more accessible and meaningful. This means that people understand abstract concepts such as time, emotion, morality, relationships, and ideas by mapping them onto concrete, bodily, and sensory experiences. These systematic mappings are called conceptual metaphors. A conceptual metaphor consists of two domains; Source Domain and Target Domain

CMT also categorizes metaphors into several types, including structural metaphors, in which one complex concept is understood through the structured framework of another. In this type of metaphor, the source domain provides a coherent set of relationships that organizes the target domain. A classic example is the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, which is reflected in expressions such as defending a position or attacking an argument.

Another important category is ontological metaphors, which enable speakers to conceptualize abstract phenomena as entities, substances, or containers. By treating abstract experiences as concrete objects, ontological metaphors allow individuals to refer to, quantify, and reason about otherwise intangible concepts. For instance, in the metaphor INFLATION IS AN ENTITY, inflation is portrayed as an active force that can cause harm or be controlled.

In addition, CMT identifies orientational metaphors, which organize concepts according to spatial orientations such as up–down, in–out, or front–back. Unlike structural metaphors, orientational metaphors do not provide detailed conceptual structure but rather impose evaluative orientation. Expressions like happy is up and sad is down demonstrate how emotional states are associated with bodily experience and physical orientation.

In the case of Kendrick Lamar's *"Euphoria,"* CMT allows the analysis to focus on how metaphors convey meaning and reflect the artist's identity and power. Thus, CMT serves as an important analytical framework for understanding how metaphors not only garnish the lyrics but also actively affect the meaning-making process within the diss track.

Previous research has already shown that metaphors in rap are highly functional, often connected to themes of self-presentation, competition, and resistance. Studies by Addison (2021) documented how rappers use metaphors of war to depict rivalries, metaphors of wealth to assert success, and metaphors of struggle to represent social hardship. Lubis et al. (2025) emphasize that rap lyrics are saturated with figurative language, and that metaphors serve both artistic and pragmatic purposes. They also highlight that metaphor is an important resource for creativity in hip-hop, as it allows rappers to express ideas in ways that are both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. These findings create a strong foundation for understanding why analyzing metaphors in rap is necessary and valuable.

In addition, research by Yaremchuk & Zhyvotovska (2024) focusing specifically on Kendrick Lamar demonstrates that his music and song lyrics is rich in metaphorical content. Several scholars have examined songs such as Alright. The finding that Lamar often uses metaphors to articulate personal struggles, spiritual reflections, and political statements. His use of metaphor has been described as layered, deliberate, and deeply tied to African American cultural narratives.

Although many previous studies have examined metaphors in song lyrics and rap music, most of them focus on general figurative language or thematic interpretation. Some studies analyze Kendrick Lamar's songs in relation to social or political messages, while others discuss metaphor as a creative element in lyrics. However, there is still limited research that applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory specifically to analyze how metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's diss tracks represent abstract concepts such as power, identity, and rivalry. In particular, *"Euphoria"* has not been widely explored using a systematic CMT framework.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to analyze metaphors in *"Euphoria."* This approach allows us to see not only what metaphors are present but also how they work rhetorically and ideologically in the context of a public feud. Such an analysis contributes both to metaphor studies and to the broader field of cultural discourse analysis.

The main aim of this study is therefore to provide a comprehensive analysis of metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's *"Euphoria"* through conceptual metaphor theory approach. More specifically, the study seeks to: (1) identify and categorize the metaphors used in the song according to conceptual metaphor theory; (2) interpret the meanings of the metaphors using conceptual metaphor theory.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive qualitative research design because the data analyzed were in the form of song lyrics rather than numerical data. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate as this research focused on interpreting meanings, patterns, and conceptual metaphors found in the lyrics of Kendrick Lamar's *"Euphoria."* Through this approach, metaphors were analyzed in depth based on their linguistic

expressions and conceptual mappings as proposed in Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

The subject of this research is the song lyrics "*Euphoria*" by Kendrick Lamar. The song serves as the major focus for analyzing metaphors and their role in lyrical content. The primary source of data is the lyrics of "*Euphoria*" which are examined in order to identify and understand the metaphors and artistic effects. Therefore, the data consists of the language and metaphorical terms used in the song lyrics.

Main instrument for data analysis is the researchers themselves, assisted by the theoretical framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The identification of metaphors was additionally validated through triangulation by the research supervisor to ensure data credibility.

Data collection is done through documentation study, where the lyrics are gathered from reliable online sources from website AZLyrics.com or official publications of the song's text. The lyrics are then carefully reviewed multiple times to identify metaphors with conceptual metaphor theory approach.

Subsequently, the data analysis in this study were analyzed using CMT (Conceptual Metaphor Theory) proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). The analysis began by identifying and categorizing all metaphorical expressions found in Kendrick Lamar's song lyrics "*Euphoria.*" To categorize the metaphors based on conceptual categories, the researchers methodically arranged in a table or column, containing several points based on Lakoff & Johnson's theoretical of Conceptual Metaphor Theory: structural metaphors, ontological metaphors, and orientational metaphors. These three types were used to organize each metaphor according to its metaphor indication, source domain, target domain, and CMT type.

To ensure data validity, the researchers read through the material multiple times and cross-checked the identification of metaphors with the theoretical frameworks of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This study focuses solely on textual analysis of the lyrics without considering performance, musical, or production elements. Therefore, the interpretation is limited to the linguistic and stylistic elements that can be attained from the text itself.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
RESULT

The identification and categorization of metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's *"Euphoria"* were analyzed using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). This approach aims to uncover how linguistic expressions in the lyrics reflect underlying conceptual mappings between abstract ideas and concrete experiences. Through systematic identification, each metaphorical expression found in the lyrics was classified according to its indication, conceptual source domain, the corresponding target domain, and its types of CMT. The following table presents the complete categorization of the metaphorical expressions identified in "Euphoria."

Before presenting the findings in table form, this section first explains the analytical process used to identify and categorize the metaphors found in Kendrick Lamar's *"Euphoria."* In this study, the metaphors identified in the lyrics were classified into three main types based on CMT: Structural metaphor, which allow one concept to be understood through the structure of another. In this type, a more abstract concept is explained using a more concrete and familiar concept. For example, when power is described as war, the idea of power is understood through the characteristics of war, such as conflict, strategy, and dominance.

Ontological metaphor, on the other hand, treat abstract concepts such as emotions, thoughts, or mental states as if they were concrete entities, objects, or living beings. For instance, feelings like fear, love, or sadness are often described as things that can act, move, or cause harm. By turning abstract experiences into tangible forms, ontological metaphors make emotions easier to visualize and understand.

Orientational metaphor, furthermore, rely on spatial orientation, such as up–down, in–out, or front–back, to express emotional or evaluative meanings. In many cases, positive emotions are associated with upward direction, while negative emotions are linked to downward direction. For example, feeling "up" usually indicates happiness, whereas feeling "down" suggests sadness or disappointment.

The application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in this study reveals that the metaphors in *Euphoria* play an important role in expressing abstract concepts such as dominance, emotional conflict, and authenticity. Through structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors, Kendrick Lamar

conveys his messages in a more concrete and meaningful way. To provide a clearer overview of the metaphorical expressions identified in the song, the following table presents their classification based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Table 1 . Presents the classification of metaphors found in the lyrics of "Euphoria" based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory approach.

No	Lyrics	Metaphor Indication	Source Domain	Target Domain	Types of CMT
1.	"Them superpowers getting' neutralized, I can only watch in silence"	Attack on opponent's power	War (neutralizing enemy power)	Creating conflict with the opponent	Structural metaphor *(conflict is conceptualized as war)*
2.	"The famous actor we once knew is lookin' paranoid and now spiralin"	Opponent is portrayed as inauthentic and mentally unstable	Acting/ Performance; Downward motion (spiraling)	Public persona as fake; psychological decline under pressure	Structural metaphor *(identity/ authenticity is performance)* Orientational *(downward= worse)*
3.	"You're movin' just like a degenerate every antic is feelin' distasteful"	Moral judgment is expressed as physical behavior/ movement	Physical movement; "degenerate' as a degraded state	Opponent's character and actions as morally low/decayed	Ontological metaphor *(morality/ character as a physical condition)*
4.	"Fabricatin' stories on the family front 'cause you heard Mr. Morale	Lying is framed as manufacturing stories	Fabrication/ Manufacturing	Creating false narratives to attack reputation	Structural metaphor *(lies are fabricated products)*
5.	"A pathetic master manipulator, I can smell the tales on you now"	Detecting deception is described as smelling something	Smell/Senses (odor detection)	Recognizing lies and manipulation	Structural metaphor *(knowing/ detecting is smelling)*
6.	"You're not rap artist, you a scam artist with the hopes of being accepted"	Opponent's career is framed as fraud, not artistry	Scam/Fraud/ Con artistry	Inauthentic musical identity; seeking validation	Structural metaphor *(artistry/ success is legitimacy vs fraud*

7.	"Tommy Hilfiger stood out, but FUBU never had been your collection"	Cultural belonging is judged through clothing/brands	Clothing/Brands as identity markers	Authenticity and cultural alignment (belonging vs appropriation	Structural metaphor *(cultural identity is clothing/style)*
8.	"I make music that electrify 'em, you make music that pacify 'em"	Music impact is contrasted as energy vs sedation	Electricity (power/ Activation) vs Pacification (sedation/ control)	Lamar's music as powerful/ awakening vs opponent's as dulling/ controlling	Structural metaphor *(music effect is physical force/energy)*
9.	"..but spare you this time, that's random acts of kindness"	Restraint in conflict is framed as charity/kindness	Charity/Kindness ("acts")	Holding back attacks in a diss context	Ontological metaphor *(restraint as a tangible "act" of kindness)*
10.	"Yeah, I'm out the way, yeah, I'm low, okay"	Social position/safety is expressed through spatial distance + low position	Spatial orientation (low/out of the way)	Staying uninvolved, quiet, or strategically distant	Orientatinal metaphor (low/away = safe/hidden)
11.	"Yeah, the island right here's remote, okay"	Isolation is conceptualized as being on a remote island	Geography/ Remote island	Social distance, separation from conflict/ industry	Structural metaphor *(life/social position is location)*
12.	"Nigga, I'm reapin' what I sow, okay"	Consequences are framed as agriculture (planting -> harvesting)	Farming/ Agriculture	Moral accountability; outcomes of actions	Structural metaphor *(actions are seeds; consequences are harvest)*
13.	"Got a Benjamin and a Jackson all in my house like I'm Joe, okay"	Wealth is shown by treating money as named entities/people	Money as personified "Benjamin/ Jackson"	Financial power and status	Ontological metaphor *(money as entities/ companions)*
14.	"..made his homeboys and them type sell they soul, okay"	Morality is framed as a tradable object ("soul" sold)	Trade/ Transaction/ Commerce	Betraying values for fame, money or, loyalty	Ontological metaphor *(soul/integrity as a commodity)*
15.	"Everybody wanna be demon 'till they get chipped by your	Toughness is framed as demonic identity, tested by violent damage	Demon/Monster identity; injury ("chipped")	Fake bravado collapses when facing real threat/ pressure	Structural metaphor *(toughness is monstrous power; conflict is violence)*

	throwaway"			
16.	"Dementia must run in his family, but let it get shaky"	Dementia (pretending to forget past sins/crimes)	Disease/Memory loss	Moral amnesia/ Ignoring pas crimes	Ontological metaphor *(showing moral amnesia toward past actions)*
17.	"The very first time I shot me a Drac', the homie had told me that aim it this way"	Learning violence is framed as instruction/ training	Weapon use/aiming	Gaining power and dominance	Structural metaphor *(power is weapon mastery)*
18.	"I didn't point down enough, today, I'll show you I learned from those mistakes"	Self improvement is conceptualized as correcting physical direction	Direction/Aiming	Growth through experience and correction	Orientational metaphor *(correct direction = improvement)*
19.	"Somebody had told me that you got a ring, on God, I'm ready to double the wage"	Competition is framed as gambling/betting	Gambling/ Wagering	Rivalry and challenge	Structural metaphor *(competition is a wager)*
20.	"I'd rather do that than let a Canadian nigga make Pac turn in his grave"	Disrespect is framed as disturbing the dead	Death/Grave disturbance	Violating cultural legacy and honor	Ontological metaphor *(legacy/honor as something physically disturbed)*
21.	"Cutthroat business, you got shit twisted"	Industry competition is described as physical violence	Cutting/Physical harm	Ruthless music business practices	Structural metaphor *(business is physical violence)*
22.	"What is it? The braids? I hurt your feelings? You don't wanna work with me no more? Okay"	Emotional reaction is framed as physical injury	Physical hurt	Emotional sensitivity and resentment	Ontological metaphor *(emotions are physical injuries)*
23.	"It's three G.O.A.T.s left, and I seen two	Alliance is framed as physical affection	Physical intimacy	Strategic collaboration or insincerity	Structural metaphor *(professional*

	of them kissin' and huggin' on stage"				*alliance is physical closeness)*
24.	"I love 'em to death, and in eight bars, I'll explain that phrase, huh"	Affection is intensified using death	Death	Strong admiration mixed with threat	Ontological metaphor *(love is something lethal/ extreme)*
25.	"It's nothin' nobody can tell me, huh"	Conviction is framed as immunity to influence	Physical resistance	Confidence and self-certainty	Ontological metaphor *(belief as physical resistance)*
26.	"I don't wanna talk on no celly, huh"	Communication refusal is framed as distance from a device	Physical separation	Avoiding unnecessary interaction	Structural metaphor *(communication is physical connection)*
27.	"You know I got language barriers, huh"	Communication difficulty is framed as physical obstacles	Barriers/Walls	Cultural or expressive distance	Structural metaphor *(communication difficulties are barriers)*
28.	"It's no accent you can sell me, huh"	Authenticity is framed as non-commodifable	Buying/Selling	Cultural authenticity	Structural metaphor *(culture/identity is not a commodity)*
29.	"Yeah, Cole and Aubrey know I'm a selfish nigga. The crown is heavy, huh"	Fame and leadership are framed as physical weight	Weight/Burden	Responsibility and dominance at the top	Ontological metaphor *(status/fame is weight)*
30.	"I pray they my real friends, if not, I'm YNW Melly"	Betrayal is framed through criminal violence reference	Murder/Crime	Extreme consequence of betrayal	Structural metaphor *(betrayal leads to destruction)*

DISCUSSION

The use of metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's song lyrics *"Euphoria"* demonstrates his mastery of linguistic expression as both a poetic and psychological weapon. Each metaphor operates not merely as a stylistic ornament but as a conceptual tool that allows Lamar to construct layers of meaning within his diss narrative. Through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), it becomes clear that

Lamar's metaphors are deeply rooted in cognitive mappings that connect physical experiences with abstract social realities such as fame, authenticity, and moral conflict. In *"Euphoria,"* Lamar merges aggression with introspection, creating a lyrical battlefield where every metaphorical expression functions as both a weapon and a revelation of his inner stance toward his rival and the rap industry at large.

The metaphor encapsulates Lamar's attempt to dismantle his opponent's perceived dominance. The metaphor "Them superpowers gettin' neutralized" is an example of a structural metaphor in which conflict is conceptualized as war. The source domain of war, particularly the idea of neutralizing an enemy's power, is mapped onto the target domain of rivalry in the rap industry. Conceptually, this metaphor suggests that fame, influence, or dominance can be defeated or rendered powerless. Contextually, Kendrick Lamar uses this metaphor to undermine his opponent's public image, implying that the power once associated with his rival is no longer effective. This metaphor positions Lamar as the agent who exposes and dismantles artificial superiority. Itrepresents a reversal of power relations a classic rhetorical device in battle rap that transforms the invincible into the vulnerable, showing that superiority built on fabrication will eventually collapse.

In another metaphor, Lamar blends the conceptual domains of performance and psychology. By calling his rival an "actor" in the line "The famous actor we once knew is lookin' paranoid and now spiralin'," Kendrick Lamar employs both structural and orientational metaphors. The opponent is conceptualized as an actor, drawing from the source domain of performance, which maps onto the target domain of identity. This implies that the rival's public persona is fake or performed rather than authentic. The word "spiralin" adds an orientational metaphor, where downward movement represents psychological decline. Contextually, this metaphor criticizes the opponent's mental state and authenticity, suggesting that sustained pressure and guilt have caused instability. This metaphorical framing serves a dual stylistic purpose: it discredits the rival's authenticity while simultaneously elevating Lamar as the voice of truth and emotional realism.

The metaphor "You're movin' just like a degenerate" reflects an ontological metaphor where moral character is understood as a physical condition. The source domain of physical degeneration is mapped onto the

target domain of morality and behavior. Conceptually, degeneration implies decay and loss of value. The image of degeneration implies regression, a return to a lower state of being, both morally and artistically. This metaphor enhances the dynamic flow of the lyrics, giving moral critique a physical rhythm. It also highlights the use of embodiment turning invisible qualities like character and authenticity into tangible, visual actions. Through this metaphor, Lamar portrays his rival not as an active innovator but as someone trapped in repetitive, self-destructive motion.

In "Fabricatin' stories on the family front," lying is conceptualized through a structural metaphor as manufacturing. The source domain of fabrication or production is mapped onto the target domain of deception. This metaphor implies that lies are intentionally constructed rather than accidental. Contextually, Lamar accuses his opponent of deliberately creating false narratives to damage reputations, portraying dishonesty as a calculated and unethical act.

While the previous metaphor highlights how lies are constructed, the following line focuses on how such deception can be easily detected. The metaphor "I can smell the tales on you now" is a structural metaphor where knowing or detecting deception is understood as smelling. The source domain of sensory perception (smell) is mapped onto the abstract target domain of recognizing lies. Conceptually, this metaphor suggests that dishonesty is so obvious it emits a metaphorical odor. In context, Kendrick Lamar presents himself as perceptive and morally aware, capable of exposing manipulation without effort.

In "You a scam artist with the hopes of being accepted," Lamar deploys a metaphor from the domain of fraud and deception to expose false authenticity. The word "scam" conveys the idea of manipulation and moral corruption, while the notion of "being accepted" represents the longing for social or cultural validation. The source domain of scams and deception maps onto the target domain of musical authenticity. This metaphor encapsulates one of Lamar's central criticisms: that his rival's fame is constructed through imitation and exploitation rather than genuine creativity. Conceptually, this metaphor demonstrates how deception in artistry mirrors societal deceit, where image often outweighs substance—a key philosophical thread in Lamar's broader artistic narrative.

Cultural identity is central in the metaphor "Tommy Hilfiger stood out, but FUBU never had been your collection," is structural metaphor. By contrasting two fashion brands one mainstream and white-associated, the other rooted in Black empowerment Lamar uses fashion as a metaphor for cultural allegiance. The rival's association with Hilfiger and disassociation with FUBU becomes symbolic of cultural betrayal and assimilation. This metaphor functions stylistically as a sharp cultural critique, weaponizing brand imagery to question authenticity and belonging. Conceptually, it embodies the metaphor "Cultural Identity Is Clothing," where one's values and heritage are metaphorically "worn" through aesthetic and behavioral choices. Lamar's wordplay transforms consumer symbols into ideological battlegrounds, asserting that authenticity cannot be bought or borrowed.

The metaphor highlights how fame often leads to the fragmentation of identity, where one's public image overtakes one's inner reality, a recurring theme in Lamar's discography. The expression "I make music that electrify 'em, you make music that pacify em." Kendrick Lamar uses a structural metaphor contrasting electricity and sedation. Here, electricity symbolizes vitality, originality, and spiritual awakening, while pacification evokes stagnation, conformity, and commercial compromise. Lamar uses this dichotomy to emphasize the moral and creative divide between himself and his rival. Conceptually, it illustrates the CMT principle that creativity and authenticity are understood through physical metaphors of power, movement, and life. The choice of "electrify" thus reflects Lamar's belief in music as a transformative, almost sacred, force that energizes listeners, while "pacify" denotes the cultural anesthesia produced by formulaic artistry.

The metaphor "random acts of kindness" functions as an ontological metaphor where restraint is treated as a tangible action. The source domain of charity maps onto the target domain of withholding attacks. Conceptually, kindness becomes an object that can be given. Contextually, Lamar frames his decision not to escalate conflict as moral superiority rather than weakness. By presenting restraint as an intentional "act," Lamar emphasizes that his silence is not passive but purposeful. This metaphor suggests self-control, maturity, and ethical dominance, reinforcing his image as someone who chooses restraint from a position of power rather than fear.

This pattern continues in the following line, where Lamar reinforces the idea that staying "low" in "Yeah, I'm out the way, yeah, I'm low," is not a

sign of weakness, but a form of strategic control. Kendrick Lamar applies an orientational metaphor where social position is understood spatially. Being "low" or "out of the way" maps onto the target domain of safety and strategy. Conceptually, distance equals control. Contextually, Lamar presents himself as calm and calculated, avoiding unnecessary conflict while remaining dominant.

The next set of metaphors in the data shows how Lamar builds his self-image as an individual who keeps his distance from the chaos of the industry. The metaphor "The island right here's remote"' is a powerful lyrics because it positions social life as a location through structural metaphor. The remote island serves as a source domain for conceptualising social isolation, emphasising that Lamar chooses to stand outside public drama. Contextually, this reinforces the narrative of independence and self-sufficiency, as if to say, 'I'm comfortable outside the commotion.'

The metaphorical definition of moral responsibility then emerges through the metaphor "I'm reapin' what I sow," which is also a structural metaphor based on agriculture. Here, actions are likened to seeds and consequences to harvest. This transition is important because it shifts the topic from isolation to self-accountability; Lamar admits that success and consequences come from personal choices. This also subtly contrasts him with opponents who are considered to be avoiding responsibility.

Next, Lamar began to address economic issues and authenticity through metaphors such as "Got a Benjamin and a Jackson all in my house." In this example, an ontological metaphor occurs when money is personified as humans who are 'present' in the house. Instead of flaunting wealth in a flamboyant manner, this metaphor presents wealth as something stable, domestic, and legitimate. After that, the metaphor "Sell they soul" shifts the focus to morality as a commodity. By conceptualizing integrity as a commodity, Lamar accuses others of willingly selling their values for fame. This shift makes the flow consistent: from self-sufficiency, accountability, legitimacy and morality.

In the next section, Lamar enters the realm of performative masculinity. "Everybody wanna be demon 'til they get chipped" uses a structural metaphor in which toughness is understood as monster strength. In context, this metaphor exposes behaviour that is merely performative aggression. Continuing with the same theme, the metaphor "Dementia must run in his family'" maps moral amnesia as a disease through an ontological

metaphor. At this point, Lamar shows that in addition to false aggression, there is also the opponent's inability to admit mistakes. So, these two metaphors together show that machismo performance without integrity is ultimately fragile.

The topic continues with metaphors of competition and control. In the metaphor "Aim it this way," power is understood as a weapon—a structural metaphor that emphasizes that mastery of language and strategy is a form of domination. The same pattern appears in "I learned from those mistakes," which uses an orientational metaphor in which improvement is coded as movement towards a more correct direction. After that, "Double the wage" maps rivalry as a bet, signaling that competition is not only conflict but also investment with risks and rewards. Here the theme becomes clear: control, correction, competitive and calculation.

In the following section, Lamar brings up the issues of cultural heritage and public voice. "Make Pac turn in his grave" makes legacy a physical object that can be disturbed through ontological metaphor. This form reinforces the argument that the opponent's actions are not only personally embarrassing, but also culturally so. After that, the metaphor "Cutthroat business" equates the music industry with violence through a structural metaphor, emphasizing the competitive and exploitative nature of the industry.

In the final section, Lamar shifts to the realm of emotions and interpersonal communication. Expressions such as "I hurt your feelings" map emotions as physical wounds (ontological metaphor), indicating that real emotional vulnerability is present in this conflict. "Kissin' and huggin" conceptualizes the alliance as physical intimacy, thereby questioning its sincerity. Meanwhile, "I love 'em to death" depicts the intensity of affection as death, displaying the extremity of feelings. This is followed by metaphors such as "nothin' nobody can tell me," which frames belief as physical resistance, and 'I don't wanna talk on no celly,' which interprets communication as a physical connection that can be deliberately severed.

The theme of communication then concludes with "language barriers," which encodes communication difficulties as physical obstacles, followed by "no accent you can sell me," which rejects authenticity as a commodity. Eventually, the metaphor "The crown is heavy" uses an ontological metaphor that maps status as a burden. This structure brings the reading back to the

starting point: Lamar stands apart and shoulders responsibility, but remains in a dominant position in the hierarchy.

At this point, Lamar expands on the issue of relationships through the metaphor "I pray they my real friends, if not, I'm YNW Melly," in which vigilance against betrayal is interpreted through criminal references. Here, a structural metaphor conceptualizes betrayal as a destructive act. The concept of friendship is linked to extreme consequences, indicating that loyalty in the industry is not only fragile but also potentially fatal socially. This metaphor reinforces the theme that interpersonal relationships in the world of rap are not merely sentimental, but also strategic and risky.

The repetition of agricultural, royal, and violent metaphors throughout *"Euphoria"* constructs an interconnected web of meanings that reflect Lamar's worldview. Each metaphor builds upon the other, creating a conceptual system where power, morality, and identity coexist in tension. Structural metaphors appear most frequently, supported by ontological and orientational metaphors, forming a coherent conceptual system throughout the lyrics. This coherence illustrates the central tenet of CMT: that human thought and language are inherently metaphorical, shaped by the body and experience. Through this framework, *"Euphoria"* emerges not merely as a diss track but as a sophisticated exploration of identity, authenticity, and the moral weight of artistic greatness, where every metaphor acts as a cognitive and emotional bridge between the world Lamar inhabits and the truths he seeks to reveal.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of metaphors in Kendrick Lamar's song Euphoria using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and stylistics shows that the use of metaphors in this song serves a much deeper purpose than mere rhetorical decoration. Each metaphor forms a conceptual connection between physical experiences and abstract ideas such as power, authenticity, competition, and cultural identity. The findings reveal that metaphors function as conceptual mechanisms that map abstract ideas such as power, rivalry, authenticity, morality, and identity onto concrete experiences. Structural metaphors appear most frequently, supported by ontological and orientational metaphors, forming a coherent conceptual system throughout the lyrics. Through these metaphors, Lamar successfully constructs a strong self-image, challenges his opponents' legitimacy of contemporary hip-hop.

Structural metaphors appear most frequently, supported by ontological and orientational metaphors, forming a coherent and interconnected conceptual system throughout the lyrics. Through these metaphorical patterns, Kendrick Lamar constructs a dominant self-image, undermines his opponent's legitimacy, and reinforces his position within contemporary hip-hop discourse.

The implication of this study reinforce the view that metaphors in rap lyrics are strategic and ideological tools that play a crucial role in identity formation and power negotiation. This research contributes to the study of metaphor and cultural discourse analysis by demonstrating that diss tracks function as complex cultural texts, in which metaphors are used to express dominance, authenticity, and artistic credibility. By applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to contemporary diss tracks, this study highlights the importance of integrating cognitive linguistic approaches into the analysis of modern rap lyrics and their broader social meanings.

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The article was written with direction from a supervisors who monitored its progress. Moreover, the supervisors revised and edited the article and granted approval for publication.

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