“POWER STRUGGLES”

A corpus-based analysis of American English power metaphors
BACKGROUND

- Goal – What can a corpus-based study reveal about metaphors related to POWER? What can be said about the embodied or experiential basis for these metaphors?

- Starting point– A study published in *Brain and Cognition* found support for the image-schematic basis for ‘power’ metaphor.
POWER IS UP

• Zanolie et al (2012) found behavioral and perceptual evidence that “power” shifts attention in a vertical direction.

• Two experiments:
  – 1) behavioral tests assessing response times to stimuli for “powerful” vs “powerless” words, and
  – 2) perceptual tests assessing ERP

• Results of both experiments significant
PROCESS

- Preliminary searches, fine-tuning, serendipity
- Reviewed various approaches in the literature by Pragglejaz Group (Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)); Stefanowitsch; Oster, Deignan...
- But first step is obtaining text, so …
SEARCH TERMS

- Search terms included ‘power’ in a variety of constructions
- Powerless, powerful, strong, weak, tall, short
WHAT DOES THE CORPUS REVEAL?

- POWER is UP
- POWER is a LOCATION ABOVE
- LOSING POWER IS FALLING
- POWERLESS is LOW, BELOW, UNDER
- ...TBD
• “It doesn’t work. And so he’s coming to the end of his line. When he’ll reach that nobody knows, but he’s certainly much nearer that. The economy is in shambles in Cuba. MARTIN: Have you seen any evidence that he is losing his grip on power? Everybody knows his economy is going down the tubes, but is he in any danger of … of falling from power?
POWER IS UP AND FORWARD

• This has become a protracted test of will, neither presidents nor people backing down. …We urge those countries whose political and economic support give him comfort in his brutality to get on the right side of history. President Assad has lost the legitimacy to lead. And it is clear that Syria would be better off without him. HARI-SREENIVASAN: Clinton stopped short of flatly demanding that Assad step down.
The idea is to meet the homeless person where they are, be ready when they are, go at their pace,” Tsemberis said. “Why would anyone want to live in a locked place, or even nearly locked place, where you are subjected to humiliating rules like children? How many Americans live under strict clean and sober rules in their own homes?

Coca: 2004 (20040614) | News; Pg. A1 | Housing homeless before treatment bucks conventional wisdom; | Kevin Fagan | San Francisco Chronicle
A COG IN THE ...

- Chaplin in “Modern Times” as a visual metaphor of the plight of the powerless
TOP COLLOCATES FOR ‘COG IN’ STH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD(S)</th>
<th>COLLOCATES</th>
<th>LEFT</th>
<th>RIGHT</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cog in</td>
<td>[nn*]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Literal string ‘cog in’ with top collocates (nouns) within 4 to the right.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A FAVORABLE CONSTRUAL

“Status and titles have no meaning here because **everyone** is a vital **cog** in the company’s success.”

- COCA: 2007 (SEP) | USA TODAY | "THE WONDER OF WORK" | TERI S ARNOLD
VOICELESS POWERLESS PAWNS

“Since the mid-1990s, some 200,000 North Korean runaways have been voiceless and largely powerless pawns in a geopolitical conundrum: China doesn’t especially want them, and the North will punish them if they return. They live in a silent daily struggle along China's border, where crossing a small river is a ticket to a new world, albeit one where they might be arrested.”

POWERLESS is without VOICE
VERBS AND POWER

- What can you **do** with ‘power’? Most common verbs that precede ‘power’ as a noun
TOP COLLOCATES POWER. [NN*] [NN*]

- Right/left = 0/2
- By frequency

[Diagram showing top noun collocations that follow 'power']

- CONTROL
- INFLUENCE
- AUTHORITY
- PRESTIGE
- WEALTH
- SPEED
- PRIVILEGE
- STRENGTH
- RESPONSIBILITY
- STATUS
- GLORY
- GRACE
- RESPONSIBILITIES
- FINESSE
- ENDURANCE
WIELDING AND HARNESSING

• From the OED, the current sense of 'wield' is...
• “a. To use or handle with skill and effect; to manage, actuate, ply (a weapon, tool, or instrument, now always one held or carried in the hand)....”
“The more we can be an integral part of Hollywood, the business, I think you'll see us become more and more powerful as a race and people.” How do you see your power, here in Hollywood, not just as an actress, but now looking at scripts, producing... How do you wield your power today? “I do think I have power. And most recently, in perhaps the last decade of my life, I’ve really come into a real understanding of that power. And on a personal level, I feel really powerful at 40 because I’ve finally GOT IT, I have finally realized that I’m complete all by myself. I don’t need a man. I don’t need an Oscar. I don’t need any of that.”

COCA: 2007 (May) | Ebony | "Looking up at the top" | Brian Monroe
QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS?

• Some resources