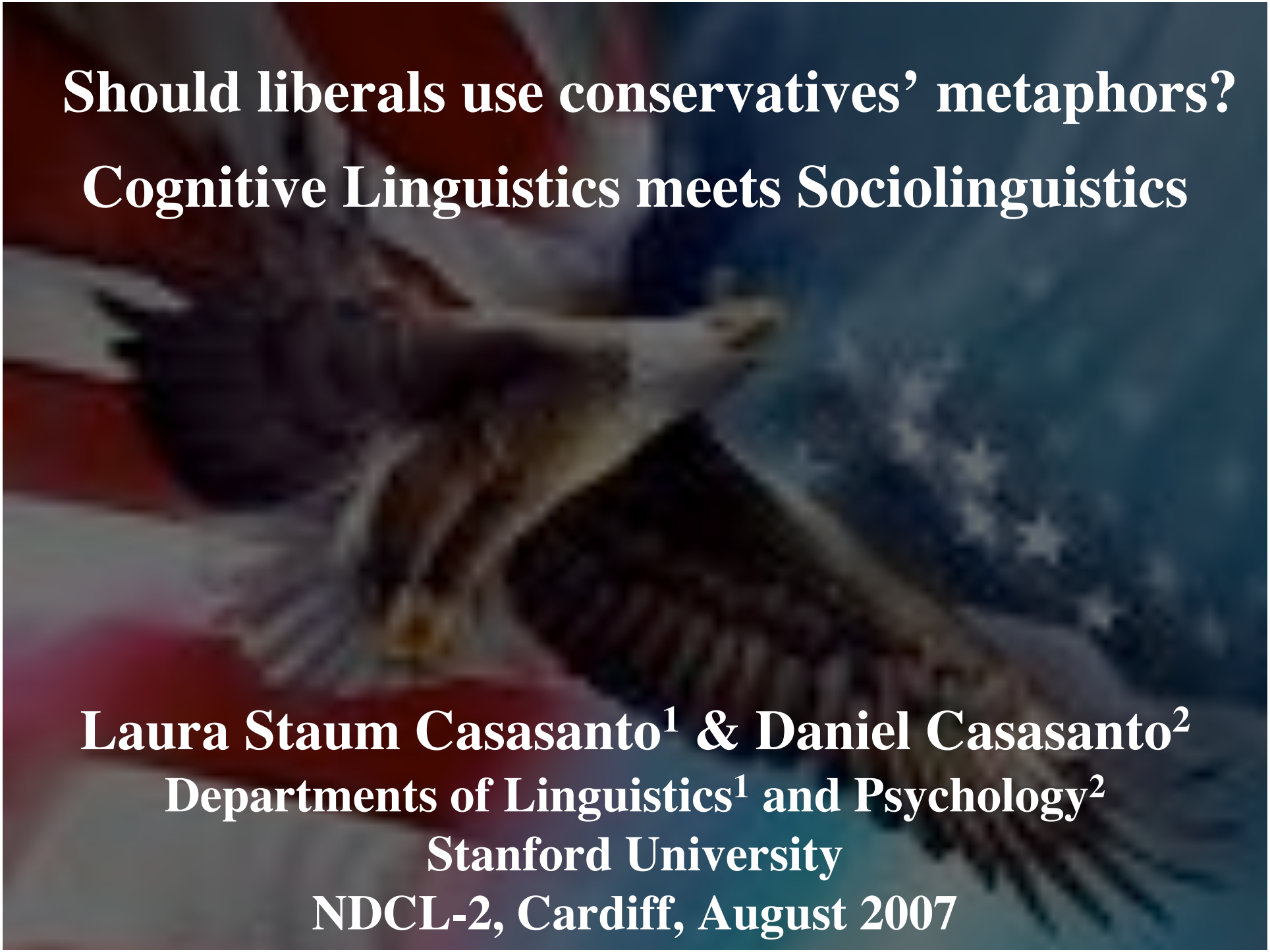

Should liberals use conservatives' metaphors?
Cognitive Linguistics meets Sociolinguistics

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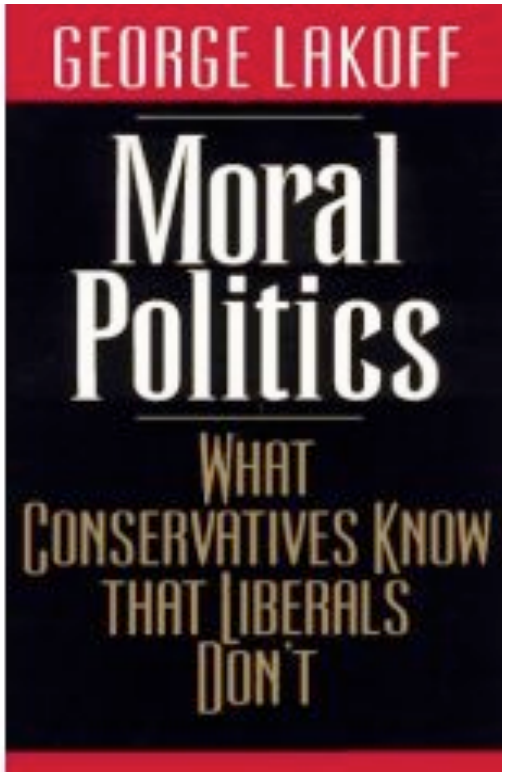
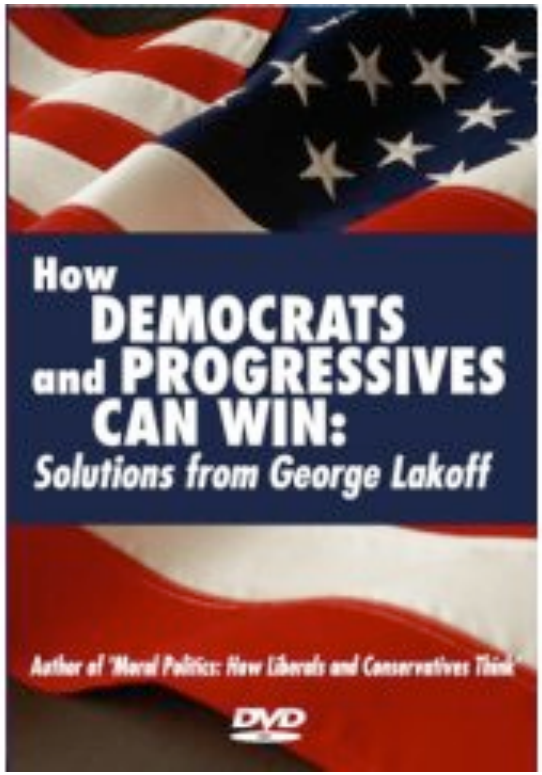
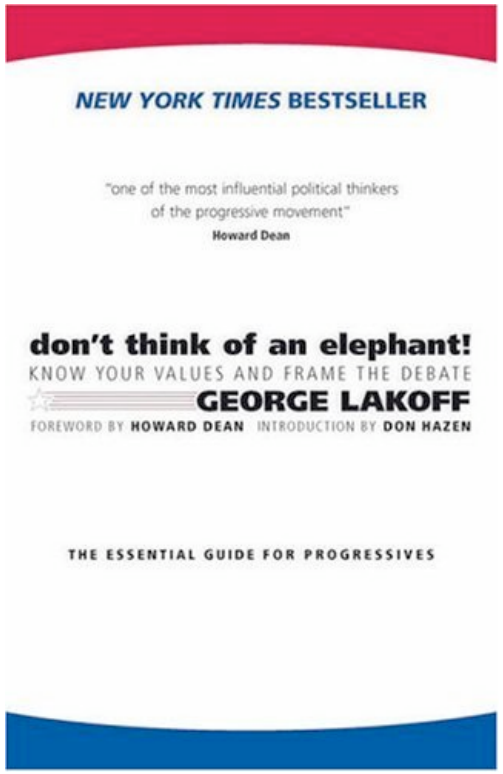
Lakoff:

The conservatives are winning…







(Lakoff, 1996; 2004; 2006)

Lakoff:

…so Liberals should learn to talk like Conservatives!

- Reframe issues in terms of new metaphors.
- If the metaphors don't exist, invent them.

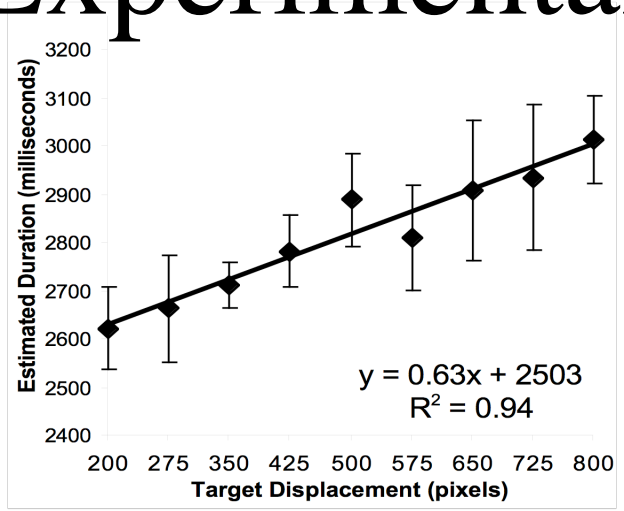
Conceptual Metaphor Theory

$$X_f = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_f} w_{if} c_{xif} X_{if} \right)}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_f} w_{if} c_{xif} \right)} + b_f$$

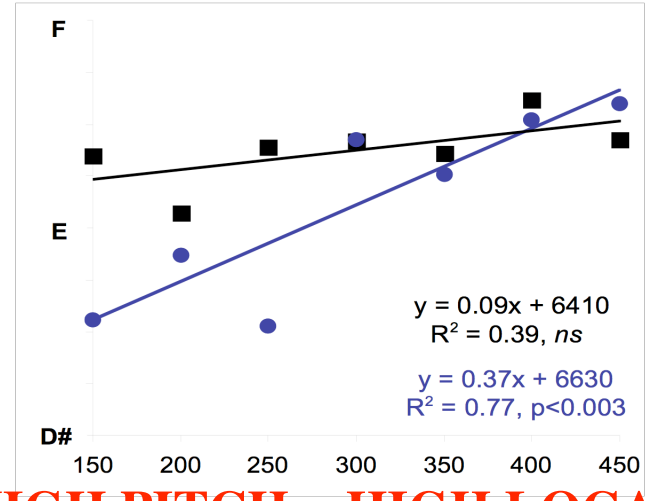
time	*ideas*	*math*
long vacation	*rising* unemployment	*large* sum
short concert	*middle* class	*small* divisor
approaching deadline	*low* price	*narrow* distribution

(Clark, 1973; Gruber, 1965; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Talmy, 1988)

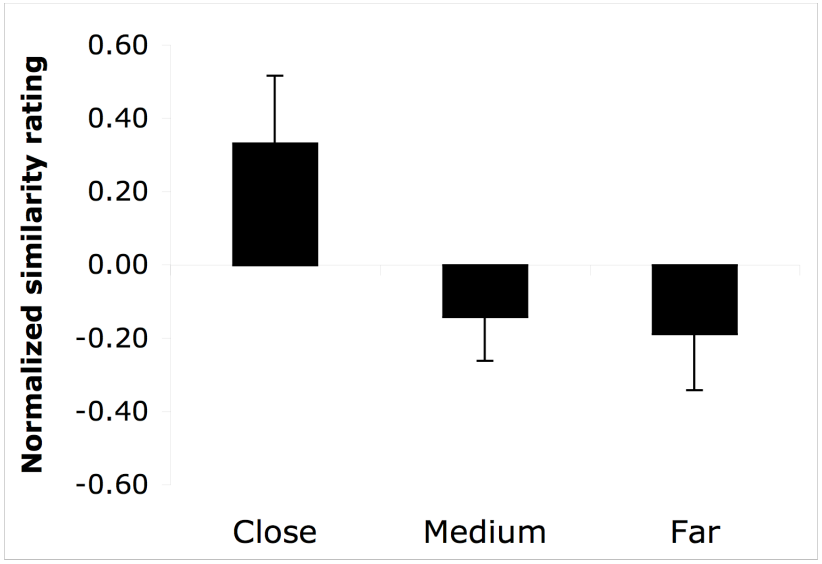
Experimental evidence for CMT



LONG TIME = LONG DISTANCE



HIGH PITCH = HIGH LOCATION



SIMILARITY = PROXIMITY

GOOD = UP, BAD = DOWN

(Casasanto, 2007; Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2007; Casasanto & Lozano, 2006, in press)

But, wait…

Maybe Liberals should talk like Conservatives

…but only if what works for Conservatives will also work for Liberals.

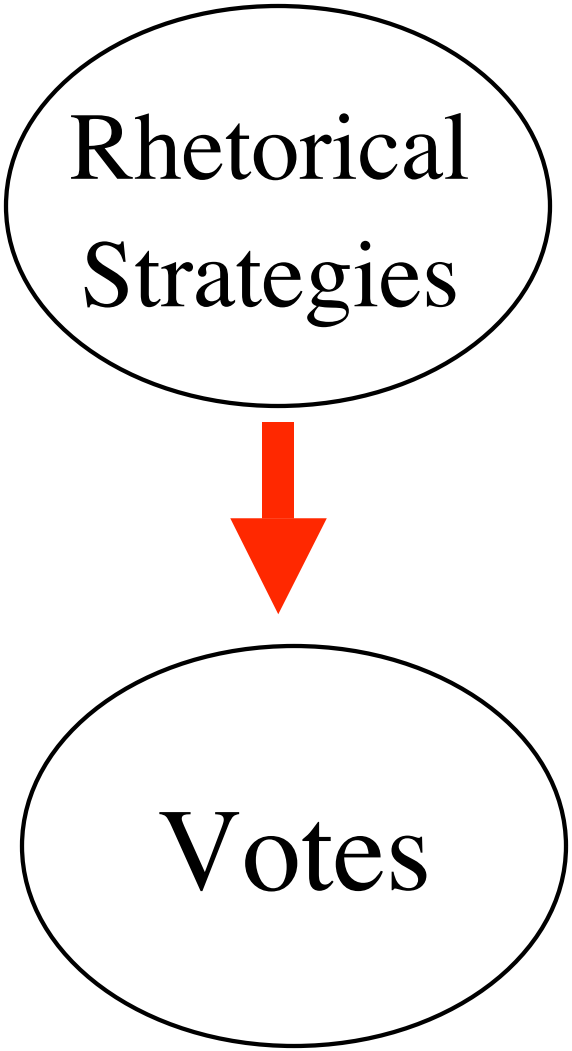
Will the strategies that work for Conservatives also work for Liberals?

"…what's good for the goose is good for the gander…"

(Lakoff, 2006)

Our Plan

1. A closer look at Lakoff's proposal
   - What does Lakoff suggest Liberals do?
   - Will these suggestions work?
2. Experiments on Metaphor & Social Identity
   - Are all metaphors created equal?
   - Do Liberals and Conservatives expect people to talk differently?
   - Do different metaphors have different social meaning?


Rhetorical Strategies
Votes

Reframing Taxes

Conservatives' Metaphor:

"Tax relief" activates TAX = AFFLICTION

Liberals' New Metaphor:

"Country Club dues" activates TAX = MEMBERSHIP FEE

(Lakoff, 2004)

Renaming ‘Tort Reform’

Conservatives:		Liberals:
Tort Law needs “reform”	-->	Tort Law protects us
Tort Law	-->	Public Protection Law
Trial Lawyer	-->	Public Protection Attorney
Frivolous lawsuits	-->	Protection from Corporate Negligence

(Lakoff, 2004)

Shades of Newspeak?

Liberals

Tort is Public Protection Law

Taxes are Country Club Dues

Conservatives

Clear Skies Initiative

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Orwell's 'Ingsoc'

War is Peace

Freedom is Slavery

Ignorance is Strength

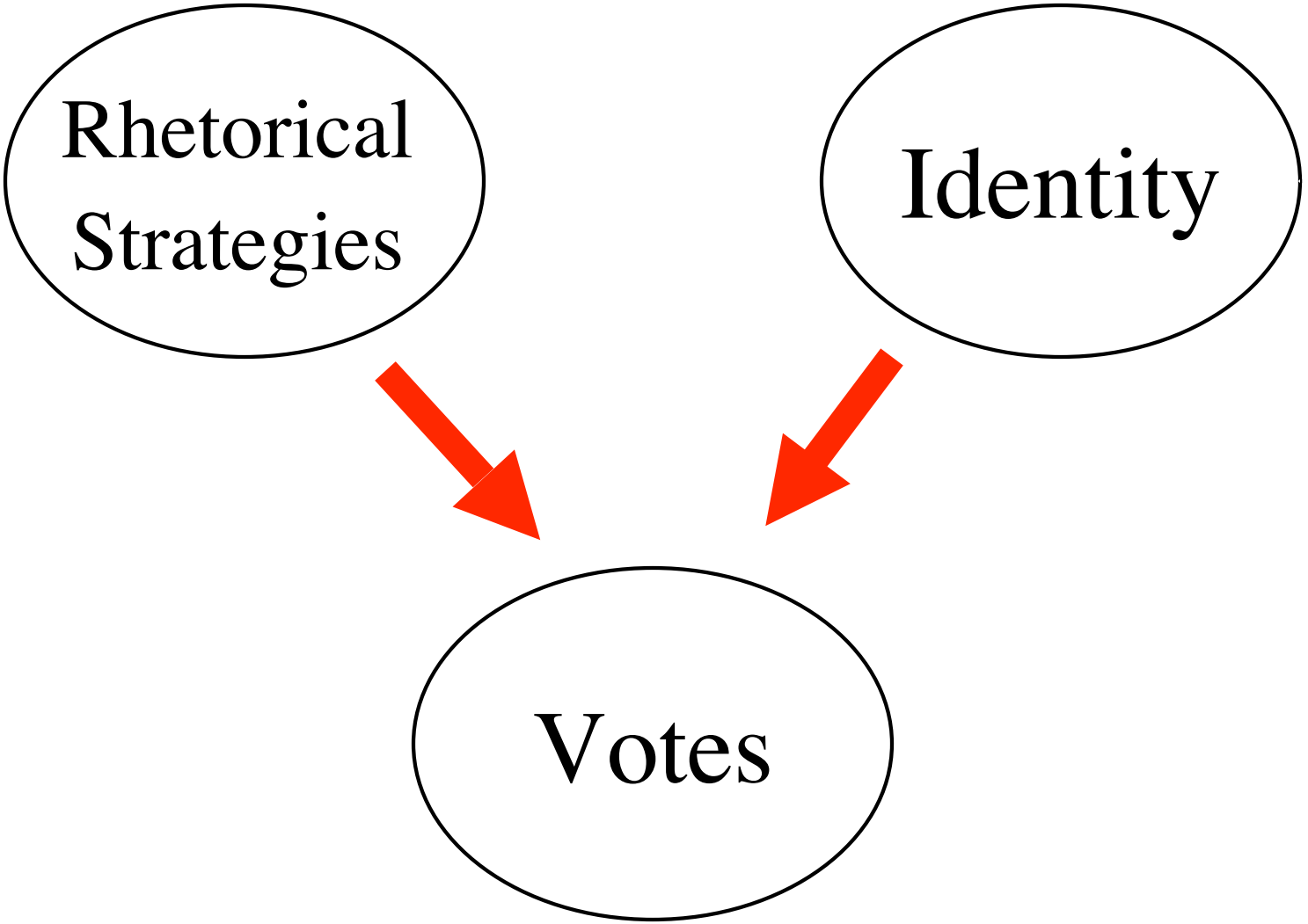
Shades of Newspeak?

Liberals' objection:

"Those conservatives are bad people; they are using Orwellian language. They are saying the opposite of what they mean. They are deceivers. Bad. Bad."

"The ***notion of reframing*** sounds manipulative. How is framing different from spin or propaganda?"

(Lakoff, 2004)


Rhetorical Strategies
Identity
Votes

Identity & Voting

“People do not necessarily vote in their self-interest. They vote their identity.

They vote for who they identify with.”

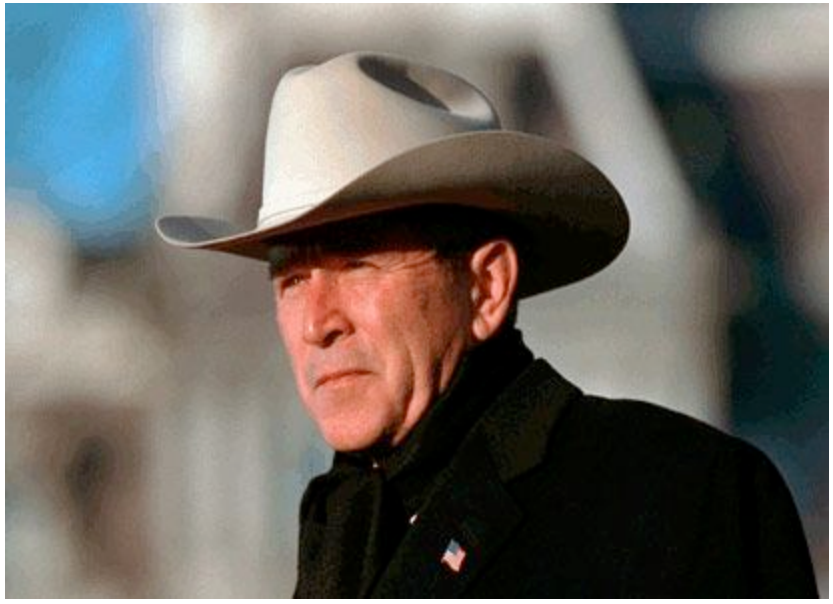
(Lakoff, 2004, pg. 19)

Identify and win!

Bush to a room full of Southern Baptist clergy:

"How do I speak to the soul of the nation?"

Identify and win!

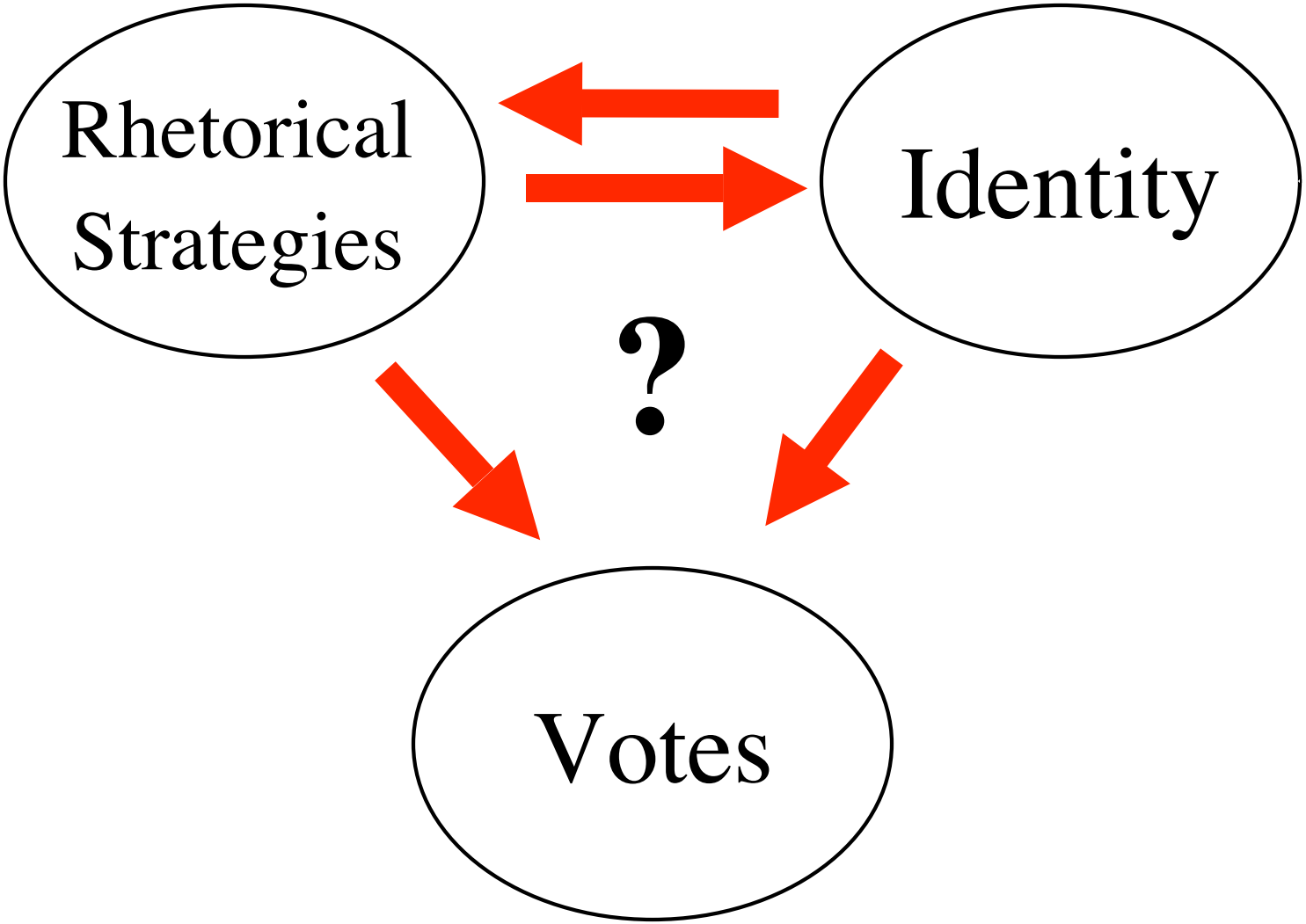


Identify and win!

Kerry on Bush's 2004 Republican Convention Speech:

"All hat, no cattle."

Mis-identify and lose!


Rhetorical Strategies
Identity
?
Votes

Our Claim:

Rhetorical strategies are *sociolinguistic resources.*

- Rhetorical strategies, themselves, have social meaning.
- Using a sociolinguistic resource identifies the speaker as a member of a certain social group.
- Rhetorical strategies that conservatives use may be linked to a conservative identity.
- To use a strategy effectively, speakers need *authenticity*: metaphors must match the speakers' social identity.

Our Plan

1. A closer look at Lakoff's proposal
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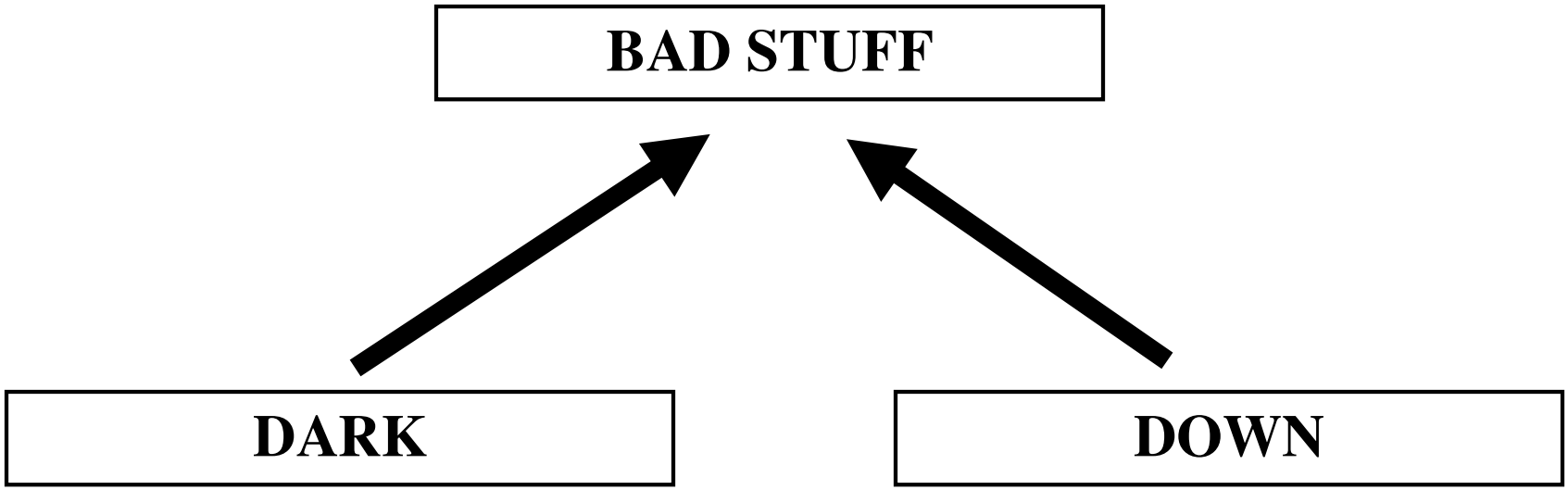
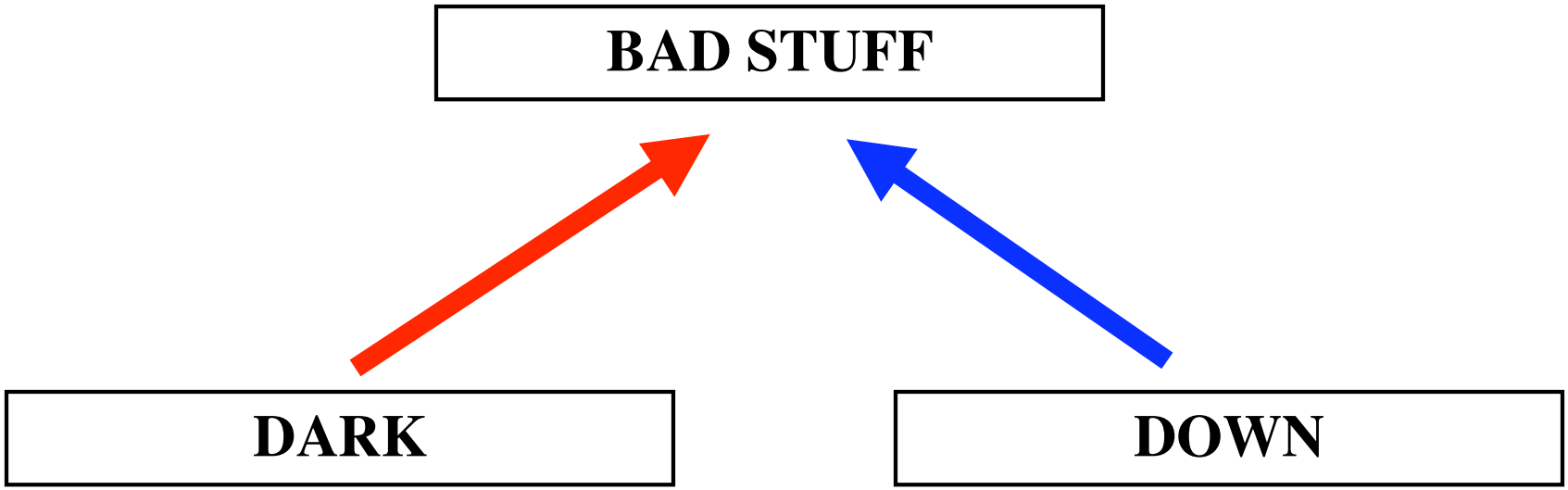
Two ordinary metaphors



How do Conservatives and Liberals use these ordinary metaphors?



Bush's metaphors

…the only way to defeat the terrorists is to defeat their **dark** vision of hatred and fear…

(President Discusses Progress in War on Terror to National Guard, Feb. 9, 2006)

…one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the **darkest** corners of our world.

(President Bush's second inaugural address, Jan. 21, 2005)

You [veterans] were there for **dark** times...

(President Bush's speech to the American Legion National Convention, Aug. 31, 2006)

Kerry's metaphors

…the credibility of this administration is so **low**, that they have great difficulty…

(Interview with Larry King, July 8, 2004)

…from that moment on, it's been **downhill** with North Korea.

(Senator John Kerry on 'FOX News Sunday', Oct 15, 2004)

…this administration has let them **down**…

(Transcript of John Kerry Responding to Attacks on his Remarks)

How ‘metaphorical’ are these metaphors?

a dark time

a low point

Experiment 1
Which is more 'metaphorical'?

Question 1

A. There's a dark side to entering politics.

B. There's a down side to entering politics.

Question 2

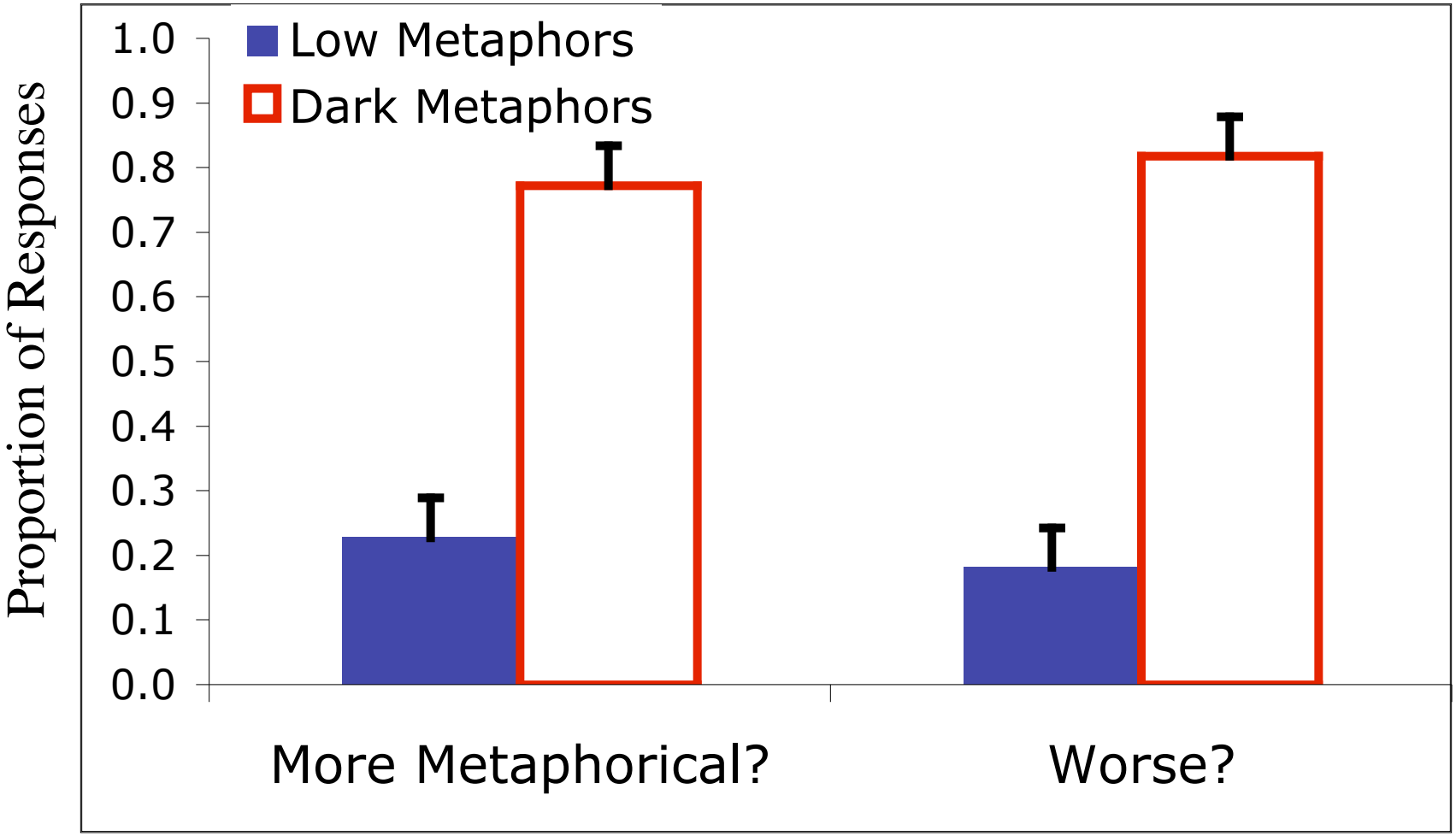
A. It was a dark time in our country's history.

B. It was a low point in our country's history.

Which statement seems more metaphorical (A or B)? _____

Which makes the historical era sound worse (A or B)? _____

Not all metaphors are created equal.



Experiment 2

Do Liberals and Conservatives expect different metaphors?

Item 1

There's a dark side to entering politics.

or

There's a down side to entering politics.

Item 2

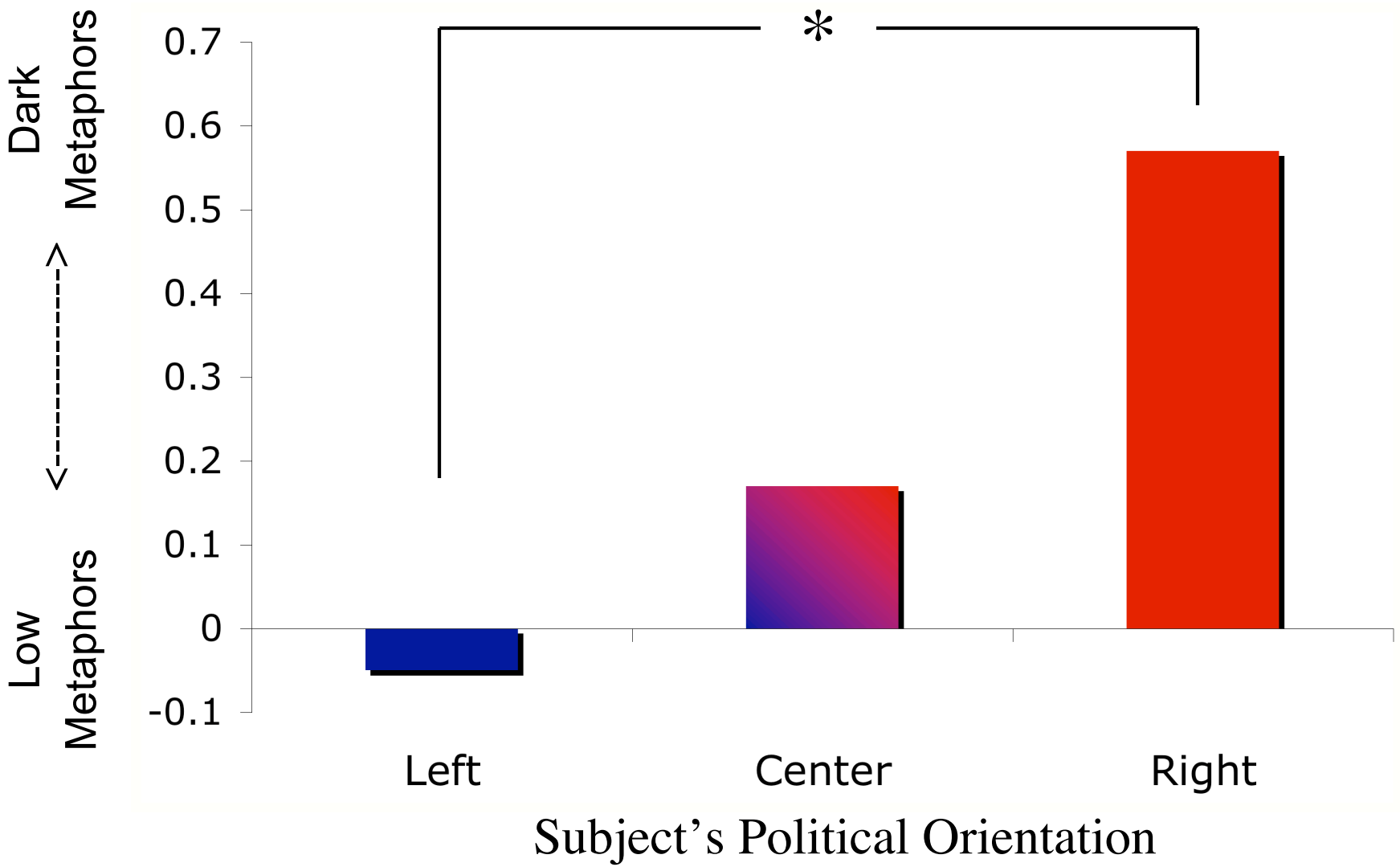
It was a dark time in our country's history.

or

It was a low point in our country's history.

Not at all likely	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**Very likely**

Politics affects metaphor attribution



Experiment 3

Do we expect different metaphors from Liberals and Conservatives?

Item 1

There's a dark side to entering politics.

or

There's a down side to entering politics.

Item 2

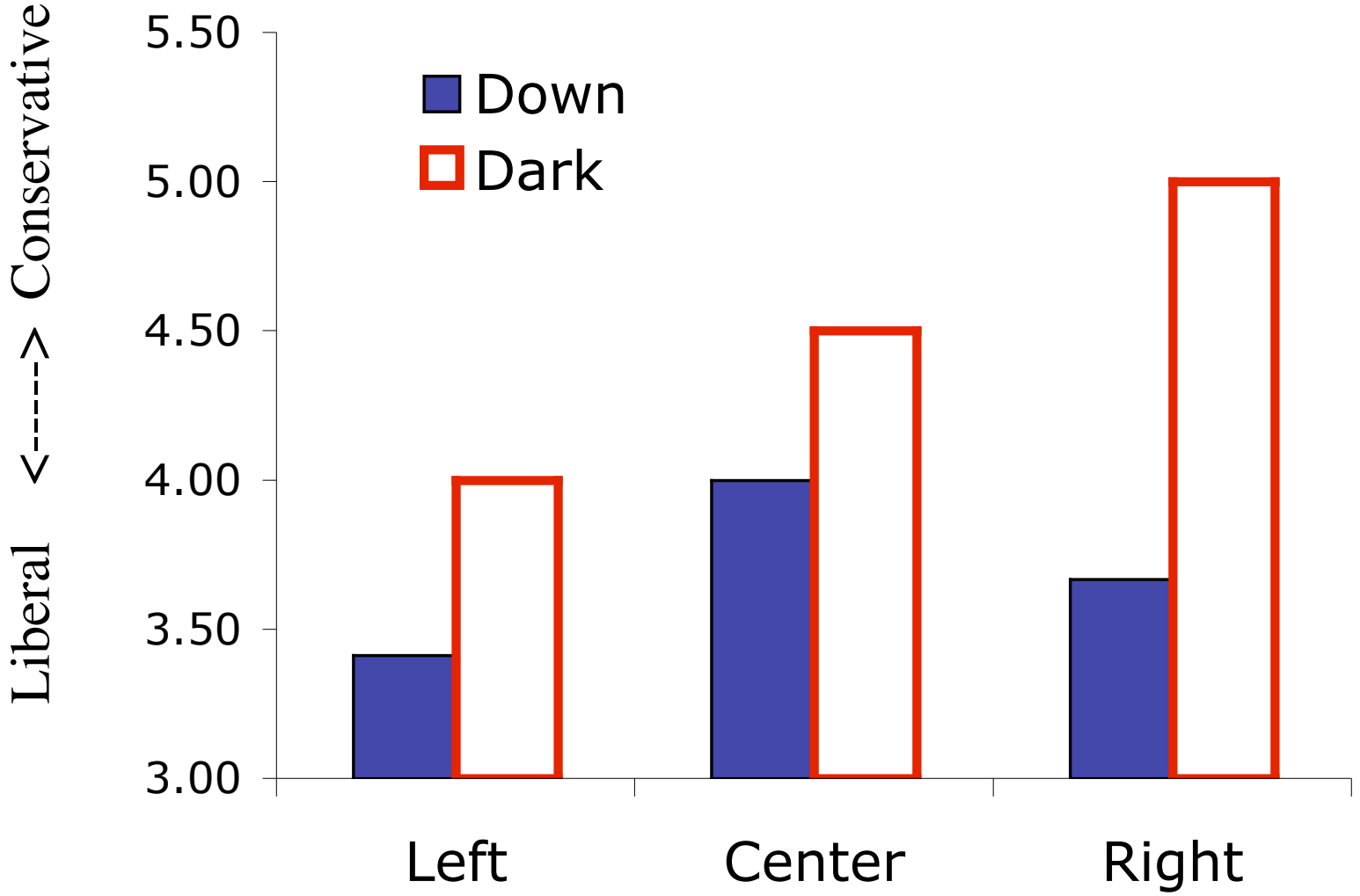
It was a dark time in our country's history.

or

It was a low point in our country's history.

Very Liberal 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **Very Conservative**

Some metaphors are more conservative than others



Interaction of Metaphor X Political Orientation ($F(2,62)=3.34$, $p=0.04$)

Summary

- DARK is BAD metaphors are more “metaphor-y” than DOWN is BAD metaphors.
- Conservatives expect people to use DARK is BAD metaphors more, whereas Liberals expect people to use DOWN is BAD metaphors more.
- Everybody thinks DARK is BAD metaphors are more conservative than DOWN is BAD metaphors.

Conclusions

- More "metaphor-y" metaphors are both *more expected* by conservatives and *more often attributed* to conservatives.
- Different metaphors have *different* social meaning.
- Liberals may not be able to use Conservatives' metaphors effectively because they cannot use them *authentically*.

Should liberals use conservatives' metaphors?

- Cognitive Linguistics tells us that the way we talk about issues affects how people think about them.
- Sociolinguistics tells us that the way we talk about issues affects how people think about *us*!
- Applying findings from CogLing in the real world without integrating findings from SocioLing (e.g., *authenticity*) could be disastrous.

JOHN KERRY
ALL HAT
NO CATTLE

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