

# ”Can I see your stain?”

## An investigation on the figurative use of the word *stain* as both a metaphor and metonymy

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This article presents a study of the figurative use of the word *stain* through a minor corpus analysis as well as a close analysis of excerpts from a therapy session. The corpus analysis in KorpusDK points to two main tendencies in the figurative use of *stain*: either referring to defeat in sports or addressing moral issues related to one’s social reputation. In the former cases, the stain is something that can be quickly removed, whereas in the latter cases, the stain has a more permanent character. The analysis of the therapy session shows how *stain* is used as an expression of social shame in the conversation between patient and therapist. *Stain* functions both as a metaphor drawing on the conceptual metaphor BAD IS DIRTY, and as a metonymy of the EFFECT FOR CAUSE type. Metaphorically, associations with dirtiness and filth are evoked, while *stain* as a metonymy operates through its function as a sign that points to what has caused it. Overall, the analysis demonstrates how metaphor and metonymy are closely related on both a cognitive and social level. As such, the study contributes to an international tendency to understand metaphor and metonymy as interwoven phenomena rather than distinct types of figurative language.

**KEYWORDS:** metaphor; metonymy; embodiment; conceptual metaphor theory; therapy; shame