



Figurative Language Across Cultures

Finding Metaphor in the Natural World

Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.

raymondwgibbs@gmail.com

Metaphor in thought, language, and other expressive actions, emerges not just from the body (or culture) alone, but from humans acting in the natural world. Numerous natural world phenomena serve as source domains in many areas of metaphorical thinking and language use. This is not surprising given people's intimate relations with the natural world, yet this fact has not been sufficiently acknowledged in contemporary theories of metaphor. My aim in this chapter is to outline some of the methodological strategies that scholars may adopt to detect how people's interactions with the natural world may give rise to very different metaphorical experiences. These strategies focus on several ways that scholars can seek evidence on the impact of the natural world on metaphorical thinking from linguistic analyses, experimental studies, ethnographic investigations, and hypothesis-driven examinations of human actions in a variety of contexts. Collectively, these methods for finding metaphor in the natural world highlight the importance of an ecological perspective on metaphor (e.g., what the world affords for meaning) and provide new insights into theoretical models of metaphorical thought and meaning-making.