

Transcript: Metaphor and Method



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Mihaela Iorga: Hi everyone. First of all, I would like to say thank you to the organisers for inviting me today to speak about my research. My name is Mihaela. I'm a teaching fellow at the University of Portsmouth and my research looked at how migrants were represented in the British and the Romanian press largely through conceptual metaphors between 2006 and 2018.

Today I will be of course telling you about my research, giving you a bit of an overview first. I will then show you the three research questions that I've answered through my work, through my project. I will speak a little bit about the data collection process and the methodology briefly. And then, I will take each research question and show you what I have identified basically. So, how I answered the questions that I had.

So, as we know, we are now in the age of globalisation. The last century or so, particularly after the Second World War, saw an increase in migration towards Europe, all European countries, regardless of their size and shape. So, migration movements, particularly, as I've said, in European countries.

What was interesting to see was that countries that had histories of immigration, such as the UK, saw an increase in immigration instead. New migration waves from developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and also Eastern Europe started migrating towards these countries, again, including the UK as well.

The two countries that my research looked at, the United Kingdom and Romania, I've picked these two because I thought it would be interesting to see how Romania, which is a country of immigration, conceptualises people's mobility in comparison with Britain which is now a country of immigration. At the same time, I should also be mentioning that Romanians

represent the sixth biggest non-British group in the United Kingdom. And so, for these reasons I thought it would be relevant and interesting to see how the two countries represent migrants and migration.

So, to do that again I have looked at how British and Romanian newspaper articles conceptualised migration and migrants between 2006 and 2018. I have also looked at how the EU was portrayed during these years and looked a little bit at the Brexit referendum as well and of course its consequences because there is a strong connection, as we all know, between Brexit and migration as well.

To do that, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of six British newspapers and three Romanian ones. From a quantitative point of view, I applied corpus linguistics tools to the data set. I did a concordance collocation and keywords analysis as well. And from a qualitative point of view, I did a conceptual metaphor analysis, again on both data sets, using largely Lakoff & Johnson's methodology. So today, for this presentation, I will be mainly focusing on that last point. So, on the results of the metaphor analysis.

On this slide, you can see the three research questions that I've answered through my research. The first one, of course, number one, right, that's the overarching research question. It looked at how migrants and the EU were portrayed in in these two countries, in the press of these two countries. The second research question, and also the third one, they aimed to kind of go deeper into these conceptualisations and explore them better, right. So, the second one looked at conceptual metaphors and specifically at the similarities and the differences between these in the two countries. The third one, the last research question, had the more diachronic focus. So, basically I wanted to see whether there was any difference in these conceptualisations or whether they stayed pretty much the same between 2006 and 2018.

I'm now going to tell you a little bit about the data collection process, again to kind of give you an overview and explain a little bit the sort of information that I worked with. So, to collect the British data set, I used the LexisNexis online platform. I applied the search query that you can see on the slide to three left-leaning newspapers, namely the Daily Mirror, the Guardian and the Independent, and also three right-leaning newspapers, namely the Daily Mail, the Times and the Sun.

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When it came to the Romanian data set and collecting the data, I had to do it manually, so I wasn't able to use LexisNexis. So, instead I again did it manually. And to do that I used just one search word and this was Uniunea Europeana, which means the European Union. And then I applied this to two left-leaning newspapers, again the ones that you can see on this slide. So, at the verbal(?) end, Evenimentul Zilei and one right-leaning newspaper as well, which was România Liberă. Okay?

On this slide, you can see again the different kind of frameworks and methods that I applied to my two data sets basically. I won't go into too much detail here because I've already mentioned these briefly at the beginning. But again, from an overarching point of view, I conducted a critical discourse analysis. I then also did a conceptual method for analysis from a qualitative point of view. And then finally, I had the different corpus linguistics tools. So, I basically combined quantitative and qualitative methods in my analysis.

And the reason why I did that is because I thought that these two would work well together, they would complement each other, and this would allow me to carry out a study of depth and breadth.

Okay? So, let me now tell you a bit about the actual metaphors that I've found in my work. Before I show you the actual results, I would like to clarify a little bit about how I went about actually identifying these.

So, I started with a collocation analysis of the term “migrant”. In the Romanian data set this resulted in 488 collocations. In the British data set, I identified 512 collocations. I then identified the different target domains and source domains from these collocations. I think now would also be a good time for me to clarify what a target domain and the source domain are, if you're not familiar with the terms.

So, a source domain is a conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain. And then a target domain is the conceptual domain that's understood through the source domain. Conceptual metaphors usually come in the formula of X is Y, where X is the target domain and Y is the source domain. And we also have two examples of conceptual metaphors here. We have argument is war where argument is the target domain and war is the source domain, and love is a journey where love is a target domain and journey is a source domain. And as you can see here, these two examples were taken from Lakoff & Johnson. So, they are not metaphors that I've identified in my own work, but I just wanted to include these so that I provide kind of an introduction on conceptual metaphors.

But on this slide you can see my actual results, okay? So, here we have the different source domains that I've identified in the Romanian and the British data sets. And straightaway I think you can observe some differences. Obviously, I've used the same colours to represent the same source domains like, for example, the object, the object one or the natural disaster one, so on and so forth.

And I would now like to pretty much show you what I have found in relation to every research question that I have. So, on the lefthand side of the slide you can see what the first research question was, yeah? And this, just to remind you, looked at the kind of main themes in the representations of migrants and also the EU. So, obviously I won't focus on the EU, but in terms of migrants and migration, I have found that migrants were compared to objects, ships, illegal goods, waves, flows, liquids, invaders, enemies and

threats. These representations were largely found in the portrayals of asylum seekers, refugees, Muslim immigrants and Roma and non-Roma Romanians.

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These were then further analysed through collocation keywords and concordance analysis. So, these were the corpus linguistics tools that I told you about before.

In terms of the main themes, the key themes that I've found, one of the main ones was this comparison between migrants and a sense of danger, a sense of a threat. And this was done through threat metaphors and also natural disaster metaphors. Examples of threat metaphors are migrants are a threat, migrants are enemies and migrants are invaders. Examples of natural disaster metaphors in my work were migrants are a wave, migrants are a flow of water and migrants are liquid.

This representation has two dimensions. One is one of the physical kind and also one that has this kind of more economic focus. And for example, the physical kind, the physical kind of threat, was found in the portrayal of Muslims. And Muslims were described as physically dangerous whereas, for example, asylum seekers and refugees were portrayed as both physically dangerous but also as a threat from an economic point of view. This I guess dual dimension was also found in the conceptualisation of Romanian immigrants in the UK. And this was similar to Breazu & Eriksson's work where they also found this economic frame that was extended to Romanian immigrants in the UK. Romanian immigrants were actually associated with a burden on the welfare system and also on the job market.

At the same time, Romanian immigrants were also linked to crime and we have publications like the Daily Mail which really emphasised this link between Romanians and illegality by focusing on the different illegal acts of

Romanians, Romanian immigrants in the UK sometimes commit, like theft, begging and prostitution.

And other themes that I've identified in my work were the quantification and the otherisation of immigrants, particularly in the case of asylum seekers and refugees.

I would now like to take, I guess we could say maybe two case studies and focus on object metaphors and also natural disaster metaphors.

So, object metaphors in the Romanian data set, the source domain amounted to 38% of all the source domains, so it was the most prevalent one. And I had five different types of conceptual metaphors. They were migrants are objects, a status is an object, opportunities are objects, force is a moving object and ideas are objects.

Here, comparing migrants with an object led to the dehumanisation of immigrants. Over a period of time these representations lead the audience to perceive migrants as less than human, and if that occurs, then again the audience of these newspapers, of these publications, could perceive, could be less desensitised to the often harsh measures and treatments that migrants are subjected to, particularly in the case of asylum seekers.

And this representation was also found in the Brexit context where, for example, the Daily Mail again argued that Muslim migrants can be brought into Britain and this would also lead to terrorism being brought into Britain implicitly. And, as it says at the bottom, of course this emphasised this parallel between Muslim migrants and terrorists.

We also have natural disaster metaphors and this time I will tell you about the ones in the British data set.

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So, the natural disaster source domain amounted to 8% of all the source domains in Britain in the British data set. There were three different types of

natural disaster metaphors in this data set. We had migrants are liquid, migrants are a wave and migrants are a flow of water. In the Brexit context, this metaphor was found, for example, when writing about EU immigrants and an argument was made that 800,000 migrants have poured into Britain by taking advantage of the EU freedom of movement provision. And here comparing migrants with the natural disaster implies that migrants have directionality and they also have an origin and a destination point towards which they are travelling.

So, the implication here was that migrants are dangerous forces of nature and they cannot be contained. And this type of metaphor was therefore used to essentially warn against migrants and migration.

I would now like to move on to the second research question. This looked at the main similarities and differences in the metaphors used in both data sets. Here I have found that similar metaphors were used to describe migrants, so both in the Romanian and the British data set. This, for example, led to the dehumanisation of asylum seekers and refugees through object and natural disaster metaphors in both data sets. In turn, this led to asylum seekers and refugees being portrayed as unwanted additions in both data sets and these representations were similar in the press in Romania and in Britain, but for different reasons.

And I would now like to move on to the third research question. So, this was the last one. And this looked at the diachronic changes in these representations over time. So, essentially I was trying to see whether these remained pretty much the same, whether they were consistent between 2006 and 2018, or whether any changes were present.

And here I have found that these conceptualisations occurred through four main periods, time periods. We had Romanians and Bulgarians accessions to the EU in 2006 to 2007, the financial crisis of 2007 to 2008, the European refugee crisis in the mid-2010s and the Brexit referendum and its aftermath in 2016 to 2018. These representations were largely negative and they

remained this way throughout the whole data set, so no big changes were identified over time. And again, the main themes in my work were the otherisation of the migrants, their comparison to an economic burden and security kind of threat.

Finally, I just have a short bibliography here. I would like to say thank you and I welcome any questions you might have.

Nicole Brown: So, thank you very much for having me, first of all. I have just put in the chat box a few links. The first link relates to the slides that you've got here so you can download them onto your own gadgets and as PDF files.

So, my approach to this presentation is a little bit different. I'm not going to be talking about one specific project, although I will refer to my research, but it's very much about what you've just said, Mel, in terms of the use of the metaphors and what does it allow and what does it open up for and how is the metaphor helpful or not? And what I have prepared for you is first of all giving you a little bit of an introduction to embodied inquiry because, as you see, my topic is objects as metaphors to account for embodiment. So, I'm going to be giving you a little bit of an introduction to embodied inquiry to kind of give you that overview first of all, and then I'll be talking about the fibromyalgia research that I have done and I'll then dive into some of the strengths and limitations of that kind of metaphorical work that's happening there. And I'll finish off with some concluding thoughts.

Please feel free to use the chat function for any questions you may have as they pop up. Don't wait until the end because then you may have forgotten your question. Stick it in the chat function. I'll keep an eye on it. If I'm able to deal with it during the presentation I will, otherwise I'll pick up on it later.

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So, just to begin, introduction to embodied inquiry. So, the embodied inquiry is a particular way of doing research that basically just thinks that the body needs to be brought back into the focus of some kind of research. And

different people look at it from different perspectives, but generally there is this kind of idea that the body isn't very centralised in research. Drew Leder, he's a philosopher, he talks about the absent body in the way that we all have bodies, we all are bodies, but we totally ignore them unless they are dysfunctional. We are eating, we are breathing, we are swallowing, our heart is beating, all of those functions are there all of the time, but we don't take any notice unless we've got a cough or unless something hasn't agreed with us and we get a stomach ache. So, as the body dysfunctions, that's when it appears to our consciousness. So, that's where Drew Leder is saying it's unfair to do that to our bodies. We need to become more aware of them.

Chris Shilling, he's a sociologist, and he comes at this from a slightly different point of view, and he's kind of saying, actually, a lot of the grand and sociological theorists have talked about the body, but without mentioning it. So, for example, he's talking about Marxism, where he's saying, well, all of the idea of effective and productive labour is fair and square. But that basically presumes that all bodies are fully functional and fully productive and fully effective at all times. Realistically, that's not the case. You know, people's bodies stop working at different points in their lives.

So, the idea of the embodied inquiry is to kind of lean into these kind of ideas and say, well, actually, yes, you have a point. We need to reconcile that body/mind split and we need to try and bring the body back to our knowledge and to the focus of our research.

So, the underpinning of embodied inquiry is very much about how knowledge is constructed, produced and where it's located. And the body is one of them. So, this goes back to the idea that sometimes when somebody asks you where's the third gear in your car, people will start moving their hands because it's an embodied knowledge. You don't necessarily know it with your mind, but you know it through your body. So, it's that kind of thing that we are tapping into.

The underpinning of embodied inquiry philosophically sits within phenomenology, hermeneutics and the cornerstones of human understanding. So, phenomenology is the study of the lived experience. So, it's very much about sort of trying to tap into people's lived experiences and trying to understand what it's like to experience, to feel something, to embody the experience. Hermeneutics is basically the study of the interpretation of text. Originally it was the interpretation of biblical texts. Nowadays that's moved away from the biblical side of things, but it's the interpretation of text and it's basically just saying that embodied inquiry sees knowledge as something that's interpretational and that's constructed in that particular moment as we are interpreting whatever is in front of us. And then the third kind of philosophical pillar is the cornerstones of human understanding and communication. And those are that human understanding is embodied. Now that is very easily sort of exemplified if we start thinking about how babies are brought into this world and how they experience the world when they grow up. Toddlers and babies are very much putting things into their mouths. They are experiencing the world in that embodied way. When they're babies, they're being held and swaddled and cuddled and moved about. Again, a very embodied way of learning and experiencing. Of course, we're talking to them as well, but language is not the only way that we are communicating or that they are learning.

So, human understanding is embodied. Language is insufficient and inexact. Let me give you a thought experiment. Think of a headache and try and think of the kinds of words that you would use to describe that headache. I'll just give you a few seconds to think of a few words. What does the headache feel like? How would you describe that?

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Okay, you should have a few words. What if I'm telling you that that headache, oh, thank you. There's one word in the chat box. I really appreciate that. Yes. Great. But I didn't mean an ordinary headache. I'm really sorry about that. What about the headache that you have just before

you get a fever? Is it still the same words? Pounding, spinning, throbbing, intense, splitting, debilitating? Is it still all of these words or is it different words? Just before you get a fever? Tingly, constant. Ah, so it's not quite the same.

What about the headache that you get just as you come out of a migraine, for example, for those of you that have it. What's the migraine headache feel like? Is that still achy, dull, or is it different? Waiting. Well, maybe you lucky people don't get migraines. Blinding. Well, one unlucky person who obviously has a migraine. So, I'm sorry about that. Yes.

And what about the headache that you have when you have got a hangover? Is that devastating or it may be sickening as well. I agree with that. Definitely intense. That was the migraine one, but the hangover one is probably also sickening somehow.

But you can see all of these are actually different kinds of headaches. They feel different. The experience is different. And we are struggling there to actually find the exact description, to find the words. So, that's very – red. I love that. That is actually like colour coded rather than just like the feeling of it. I really love that. Because what you've done is you have already tapped into that experience of using a metaphor, because “red” is not a pain experience. It's not a word that describes the pain, and yet it does describe the pain somehow, doesn't it?

So, because we are having issues with human understanding being embodied and with language being insufficient and inexact, we automatically move into the metaphorical sphere. And this is where Lakoff & Johnson's work comes in. I mean Mihaela mentioned Lakoff & Johnson earlier. *Metaphors We Live By* is one of those brilliant, brilliant books which talks about how all of our understanding and communication is metaphorical and you just see how many different words you're already using in everyday communication that are actually metaphors and we don't recognise them anymore because we use them so much. It's our natural way of

communicating. So, in embodied inquiry and what we are trying to do is we're trying to tap into that natural way of communicating that is why we're using metaphors.

So, I'm going to hop over to some examples from my fibromyalgia research. For anyone who is not aware, fibromyalgia is a pain condition that's also characterised by chronic fatigue, by widespread pain and consistent pain. It is also characterised by psychological dysfunction, sleep disorders, cognitive dysfunctions and the cognitive dysfunctions are often describes like as brain fog or memory retrieval issues or sequencing problems. So, it's quite an impactful experience to have fibromyalgia. And I was interested when people have got this kind of condition, how do they make sense of their academic identity? How can you be an academic in your own mind? How can you define yourself as an academic when you've got a condition that suddenly means you can't remember the word that you meant to say? Where your brain is suddenly stopping the functions for you? So, this was the starting point of my research, that's what I was interested in.

And I felt I couldn't because I believe very strongly in that embodied inquiry and the underpinning of it, the philosophy of it, I couldn't quite see myself going back to ordinary interviews and questionnaires, and Likert scales. It had to be something different. It had to be trying to tap into this natural way of communicating through metaphors.

So, what I did was I asked people a question and in response to the question I asked them to put an object into a box. So, here we go. Here is a box. So, this is basically my research data. So, it's a case of I asked a question. Who are you? What affects you? How do other people see you. What does life with fibromyalgia feel like? Oh, sorry, what role does fibromyalgia play? That was the fourth question. And the final question was, what does life with fibromyalgia feel like?

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So, they were five questions and people basically I asked the first question. They put some objects into the box, sent me the image, and then I released the next question. So, here you've got an example of some people, one person's box, and having stuck their objects into the box. Now in this case you see that little card that stands up there. This is an image of that person's family, a Christmas card with her family on it. So, this is obviously something where she was talking about how she's this family person, that she's the person that's kind of, you know, like, yeah, revolving around her person. But she also put in some glue. You can see that there, that see-through bottle of glue there. This is because she says that she holds the family together. So, you can see how that metaphorical expression worked for this particular person.

Now the problem with that kind of approach, it's brilliant in many, many ways and I love it and I use it a lot, but the problem was some people were like, "Well, my objects are too big, I can't put them in a box". So, for example, this person then ended up doing a collage because she wanted to put in her wheelchair and the wheelchair obviously didn't fit. So, you've got this, and then she also wanted to put in a sofa, which is on the bottom left there. So, it's those kinds of things that made the representational work a little bit more difficult because clearly you couldn't fit any of that into the box.

But it doesn't stop there. So, this is not just about data collection. It's also about analysis. So, let's have a look at analysis and that's where again I'm still using metaphors but in a slightly different way. So, what does analysis in embodied inquiry look like? Well, generally, let's talk about what analysis is, and a lot of the times we're talking about coding and identifying themes, and we're looking at generating, yes, absolutely, generating data. We are looking at reliability, validity and objectivity. I don't particularly like these terms within qualitative research, but a lot of the times the handbooks are still talking about it. I mean, more recently there is this recognition of pre-existing knowledge and that it's becoming an interpretative process and that it's making meaning and making sense. So, doing something to the data

and developing themes from that. So, recognising that as a researcher we have a role to play. That's in general, in qualitative research, becoming a little bit more prevalent. People no longer talk about themes emerging because they realise that themes don't just pop up, that we make them pop up.

In embodied inquiry we are also, as I said earlier, the knowledge is interpretational, but we also recognise that it's produced and relational. It's not something that's happening just or it's out there. It's something that we are doing, we are generating, we are developing. It's contextual. It depends on really the circumstances within which we are talking about. And then it's multimodal. And this is the part that's interesting for analysis specifically. If we're saying that knowledge is multimodal, therefore it's not just text, it's not just language, it's other ways of and other forms of communication, then as far as I'm concerned, we can't leave it at just interpreting and coding and generating themes. We have to do that process in a slightly different way.

So, what I'm doing is I'm using objects in the analytical process. And the process of using objects in analysis is actually not that different from how you would generate themes in a thematic analysis, for example. So, the first part is that you gather the data. That's what we all do, right? Then you're analysing the data according to whichever framework you're using. For example, the thematic analysis, you're starting to code things. Still same thing. We're still doing the same thing. Where we probably look slightly differently is that with the objects we're starting to develop analytical hotspots. Hotspots is a term that Maggie MacLure was using in one of her articles which was published in the *Qualitative Inquiry* a while ago, 2011, I think. And she's talking about things that are of interest to us as researchers. We shouldn't, again, this is embodied inquiry, we shouldn't be removing ourselves from our research. We should just become aware of how we fit and where we fit within our research. And as such, it's okay if you read something in your data that makes you go, "Wow, this is interesting," then then go with it. If it goes, if it's some, if the data tells you, "Ooh, this is awful,"

again, go with it. Listen to that. Listen to your body. Listen to those hotspots that you can see in your data.

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And from there you start considering possible representations. The next stage then is to turn those representations into an installation, for example, and to evaluate and critique. And those last two kind of go together and I will show that to you as well.

So, going back to my data, what I had was loads of pictures like this one and like that one. I had lots of that kind of information. And I was then trying to experience or to talk about what it feels like to be an academic with fibromyalgia. So, I started playing around with objects and with images and with bits and pieces in my own home. So, on the left there you can see my own beginning of an identity box as to what makes an academic. And on the right you can see my interpretation, beginning interpretation, and what it feels like to have fibromyalgia.

And I developed that a little bit further. So, on the left you see the academic identity. That's a representation that I created from the data. So, people were mentioning to me and talking to me about how an academic is somebody in a lab coat, how they are doing all this efficient work, how they're doing research readings, etc. And I created this installation on the right. I then started dabbling with some painting and I was sort of listening in to what people were talking about in terms of the fibromyalgia identity. So, the private identity and the academic identity, the public identity. And I was trying to represent that in those two, in that painting with the two halves of the whole.

I also started gathering different objects in my own home. So, you see my living room or part of my living room here with some objects that I've gathered to start developing an installation on what it feels like to have fibromyalgia.

Now, all of these things are analytical developments and analytical stepping stones and points of understanding of my own data. But not everything of this here is able or is good enough to be shared. So, how do we know whether something is good enough to be shared and to be developed further?

Well, this is where these last two points come in. Turning the representation into an installation so, that turning something into a representation, that's the stepping stone that you do in your own space. And then you start looking at how can I turn that into something that's meaningful for the audience as well? And this is where the two frameworks here, for example, are quite useful. By the way these are not the only two frameworks, but these are two frameworks of analysing and evaluating our spaced research. Barone & Eisner are on the left and Levy on the right. And these two frameworks are not, again, they're not very dissimilar from general criteria of what makes good research. It's about social significance, it's about concession, coherence. It's about usefulness, significance, it's about good methodology. So, you can see all of those things are there.

But then where these frameworks are slightly different, they're looking at evocation and illumination, or they're looking at audience response, aesthetics or artfulness. So, that is how I know something is good enough to be shared or not.

So, for example, going back to this – oops, sorry that was the wrong one. This image here on the right, that painting. I showed that painting to my husband and my son. They really didn't know what to do with it. That to me was clear enough that it is not good enough to be shared. I need to do something with it. I showed that picture to friends of mine and they straightaway connected with it. “Ooh, this is you being you”. So, straightaway they connected with that experience of illness and I knew I have something here that I can develop further.

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So, what I've done is I have developed some of these elements further and, for example, here, that chair, you can see that development into what it then became an installation in a local gallery in 2018 under the topic Art is Something Much More Dangerous. So, you can see all of those objects on the right there that obviously made the final cut. Not everything was there and some other things were introduced. So, as you can see, you've got opportunity here to develop then something that's actually quite useful as in it disseminates your research, it shows people's experience.

So, what are the strengths and limitations of the metaphors? Well, as far as I'm concerned, they paint a much clearer picture of your data, of what you've learned, of the things that you want to share. That's the kind of thing where we're talking about illumination and evocation. That's where the metaphorical work is really, really useful.

They also help making these emotional connections and developing that kind of opportunity for creating empathy and transformation in your audience. Again, that's something that the arts based approaches in general do, but the metaphor work through the objects is something that's really, really powerful in that respect. And obviously they make the research accessible because people look at these chair things and they kind of connect with that at a level that no research article will. So, there is something there again about like enabling that impact and engagement agenda that we're talking about in higher education a lot.

The limitations? Well, I would suggest that there is something there about the skill set. You know, the limitations are really your own skill set and how limited you are by your own skills. I mean, I'm not a painter, I'm not a drawer. I still dabble with painting and drawing, but I'm not necessarily good at it. So, I'm curating rather than creating and in that respect the objects are quite helpful.

Quality, truthfulness and robustness. A lot of people may argue they can't really see that, but this is where and, again you know, if you're able to

explain the philosophy that's lying behind it, if you've been able to explain and justify the approach that you've taken, actually you can also justify the robustness to truthfulness and the quality of it.

Ultimately, these last three items really depend on what I say lies at the heart of that kind of metaphorical work through object is that you have to be transparent about what you've done, why you've done it, how you've done it. You've got to be reflexive, challenge yourself, why am I doing this? Why is this a hot spot for me? And be critical about it as well. You know, going back to the evaluation. I mean, I could easily say, "Yes, this is a pretty picture on the right". I could easily say, "Yes, this is evoking and illuminating somebody's experience". But it's me being critical about that work that makes me realise it's not good enough to be shared. So, I think that's where the metaphorical work and the object work is something that's really, really powerful, but at the same time relies quite heavily on the researchers personal positionality and opportunity to be reflexive, transparent and critical.

For the sake of completeness, there is a book out there that you may want to have a look at and here is again my details. I'm going to stop talking there and I look forward to any kind of discussion we may have now or later.

Andy Coverdale: Hi everyone, it's great to be here and thanks to Nicole and Mihaela for two really interesting presentations.

So, I'm drawing today on changing research methods. This was an NCRM project funded by the ESRC that ran from 2020 to 2022. It was led by Melanie Nind and involved myself and our colleague from the University of Manchester, Robert Meekin, and we explored how researchers were adapting their research methods in response to the challenges that they were facing following the disruptions caused by the COVID pandemic. We did this three phases of engaging with researchers and with the literature from which we created quite a significant output of reports and guides and webinars, etc, and you can find these on the project website there.

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Our findings focused on how researchers were continuing or getting back to making research happen, but also how they addressed challenges related to validity and ethics. And we went on to explore these interrelated themes of crises and uncertainty and sustainability.

So, I'm focusing today on the first round of online knowledge exchange workshops which we ran in late 2020. So, roughly six months or so after the first lockdown at a time of continued restrictions and lockdowns, most of us working from home. And we'd seen how active and responsive the research community was at that time in sharing resources and supporting one another in our own institutions, but also through blogs and social media and crowdsourcing, etc. And so, the overall aim of the workshops was to feedback what we've started to find, but also to tap into that collegiality, if you like, to bring researchers together, to share their experiences in a supportive and collaborative environment.

So, we ran eight workshops in this in this first round of workshops on Zoom and each was focused on a specific research method. So, we had interviews or surveys or the methodological themes. So, we had ethics and I think one of them was around researching with vulnerable groups. So, there was a shared sort of theme which our participants could connect with.

We averaged about a dozen, I would say, participating researchers in each workshop, although as you can see, this varied between five and 17. We had 56 in total. And some did attend more than one workshop.

A wide range of social science disciplines and also career stages. So, we had from doctoral students through to professors and we did have some industry, government and third sector based researchers in some of the sessions.

The majority were UK based, but we did have some joining some from overseas.

Each workshop ran for 90 minutes, but we had the option of an additional hour of discussion which, to be honest, nearly everybody chose to take part in. The workshops were led by Rob with Mel and myself facilitating and they were recorded and transcribed.

And it was Rob actually who came up with the idea of adapting a rivers based activity which we sourced from a workshop ice breaker method which was devised by the STEPS Centre and the link's there. And we use this method to encourage, we wanted to use this method really to encourage researchers to think through their ideas in advance of the workshops, but also to then use them to help introduce themselves at the start of the workshop. So, prior to each workshop, we asked our participants to create a rivers based image to visually represent their research activities and experiences over the last year or so with the idea that they could share these at the start of the workshop.

We did provide a few examples of metaphors, rivers based metaphors, that they might consider using, but we were really flexible about what they included and how they created their images. I think it's fair to say that when we tried this in the first workshop, we really didn't know how much the participants would engage with it, to be honest. As it happened, most researchers, the vast majority of researchers, chose to create and to share their drawings, often for 10, 15 minutes or more. Colleagues wanted to ask questions after. And as it was on Zoom, there was some use of chat during the presentations. So, lots of enthusiasm. To be honest, most people were mostly apprehensive about their drawing skills. So, other than that there was lots of enthusiasm.

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So, the rivers exercise really became an integral part of our workshops, not only in taking up a significant part of the sessions, but also in providing a platform for the discussions that followed.

So, I will be showing some of the river drawings that our participating researchers created and shared during the workshops and names and any identifying content have been removed. But in doing so, it's important to recognise that these are not sort of standalone artefacts, because as a unit of analysis, if you like, the original presentations of these drawings, or image accounts as we chose to call them, we saw these as assemblages. So, comprising the drawings, but also the verbal narratives that went with them. And this really positions metaphor beyond the purely representational to that which is also enacted and situational.

So, what did we get? We saw wide variations in form and style and I'm just going to scroll through a few examples for you to see and it'll give me a chance to have a drink. So, mostly hand drawn, though we did have some that were computer generated and we did see some use of collage etc. Varied use of text and annotation within the images. Some, as you can see, were quite detailed and a lot of work gone into them. Others maybe not so much. You know, we saw some more sketch like things that were done perhaps a bit more quickly. But again, you know, a rough representation of rivers.

I should have some music on now really while I'm going through this gallery of different ones. Yeah, there was a certain amount of creativity, I think, and real variation in terms of how the task, the exercise was interpreted. This researcher actually was using a photo based sort of simulation as part of his data collection, so it very much reflected his work.

A certain amount of playfulness as well. You know, we saw that as well. So, as you can see, a lot of variation in terms of how the exercise was interpreted and how the rivers metaphor was used.

So, you would have already noticed some sort of recurring metaphorical elements in there. We saw variations in flow, direction, shape and the width of rivers that were used in different ways, used for different ways of interpreting their research and their methods adaptations. Flow indicated

changes of pace, progress and productivity and pauses, but also disruption and turbulence as we saw that with waterfalls and whirlpools and rapids, etc.

We had changes in direction, faults in the river indicating sort of choice and options and decision-making. Tributaries were featured to denote different projects or work packages or different aspects of work that people were involved in. And some featured external features such as logs, boulders and dams, etc, or additional sort of land based features. We had mountain ranges and things like that.

So, yeah, really interesting the way that these different elements were brought in.

It was also interesting how some of these river based metaphors extended beyond the presentations. I think we've definitely heard a few sort of watery or aquatic terms being used in the subsequent discussions. So, I think there was that sense of that the exercise that we say it did sort of permeate further on into the workshops, I think.

Discussions. So, discussions really focused on the challenges and the options and the affordances of methods adaptations, and these were obviously central to the image accounts. But many of our researchers chose to include wider academic work practices such as teaching and things like that. Depending on their role and their responsibilities, some were engaged in multiple projects or overseeing multiple projects and some certainly included other research stakeholders, including colleagues and participants, funders and ethics committees.

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A few of our researchers also chose to include more personal aspects of their lives, things like work/life balance. And especially related to the effects of the COVID disruptions of COVID, including sort of mental health, mental wellbeing, family such as the example you can see here. So, as I say, quite

a few interpreted the exercise in different ways and had different scope in terms of what they chose to include.

And yes, we did get a few oxbow lakes, which was interesting, which people seemed to remember from their school geography days, which were used in different ways. So, that's interesting.

So, when we started analysing some of these image accounts, we sort of drew on themes of temporality, agency and effect. Obviously our exercise created a common timeframe in setting our activity. We created a common timeframe and some chose to include key dates and events and even sort of monthly intervals as we saw I think on the previous drawing.

But nearly all drawings centred around that first lockdown in early 2020. As I say, this was just about six months or so after that, so things were still pretty raw and our participants were still trying to engage with the disruption that was happening and all of that. And so, I think that first sort of lockdown created a clear and shared sort of focal point with before and after states of their research practices on each side.

And this indicated to a certain extent what was considered normal and then abnormal, though to be fair, this was challenged by some including other crises and disruptions that were not necessarily caused by COVID. And I think Mel, I think this was reflected in some of the literature that we reviewed which contextualised COVID as one of several crises at that time and we were noting sort of movements such as Black Lives Matter at that time as well.

And here in this example, in this drawing, that first lockdown is represented by a logjam. I think the author of this drawing described it as a terrifying mess which is really interesting. We did quite a bit of analysis on this one. We really liked the shovels. The researcher described digging new canals to sort of reroute the progression of the research project through new methods adaptations. So, here there's a sense of the river physically

embodying the research and the work that's being done on it to shape it. And it's interesting to perhaps contrast this with others where there was more of a sense of navigating or being swept along by the river, in some cases literally representing themselves or other stakeholders in or on the river. And in this example, if you look carefully, you can see there's sort of a self-portrait of the researcher in a boat.

So, two subtly different interpretations of agency perhaps there. But I think both of these show examples of how metaphors can communicate the embodied and emotional positionalities of researchers.

So, summing up then, to quote from our recent book chapter, which is there, the rivers exercise established a necessary level of familiarity and trust between the participants and a sense of shared experience that persisted throughout the workshop sessions enabling continued engagement and discussion in the communal space that was supportive and collaborative.

I mean, I would certainly recommend having a go at creating your own river around your own projects or your PhD work or whatever it may be. Perhaps do it in a small group and compare. And thinking about how you might look at adapting this method perhaps you know in your own research, from our experience, to sum up, really river based metaphors can, as we've seen, incorporate visual, textual and verbal elements, they can help exteriorise and communicate experiences, provide a shared narrative framework for communal relational meaning making. Certainly, generate rich data and dialogue that can be performative and interactional, evoke temporal, biographical and effective responses. And certainly, we saw in our workshops, encourage knowledge exchange, so collaborative problem solving and the sharing of resources.