

LINGUAGRAMS: An ocean of meaning in a drop of grammar

(Wittgenstein)

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Do intro on this being a book for therapists and others

It is quite amazing that we ever really understand what we are saying to each other. But it is so often the case that we think we know what the other means and we presume and act as if we do. There are instances though when this presumption does not bear fruit and we feel misunderstood or the intentions of the conversation or idea are not fulfilled.

Maturana proposed that “Meaning is always given by the receiver “ Or said differently “You mean what I say”. So it is not surprising that misunderstandings occur and hoped for and invited consequences do not happen.

There are dictionary definitions of words, which give us a consensus idea of what words mean to a majority of people. However Wittgenstein talked about the meaning of a word emerging as the word is used. When is a word used: in what context: what are the associations, with which other words is this word used? Each one of us will create a different meaning depending on what context we are in and with whom we are having a conversation. Each word is like an engine pulling along numerous carriages and each carriage is filled with other words and meanings and actions. The expansion of meaning and development of new meanings is endless. This expansion allows for multiple stories to be lived and told, all of them are valid but more or less useful.

As early as 50AD Epictetus, the Greek sage and Stoic Philosopher suggested it is not things themselves that disturb us but the view we take of them. (*Discourses*. Chap. xxvii.). Already the ideas of “reality” being constructed was being voiced. In 1966 Berger and Luckmann, wrote about the Social Construction of Reality. These early ideas of social construction (SC) were in contrast to the more dominant

dualistic world of Structural - Functionalism in the 1960s and 70s, where there was truth and objective reality. Early Social constructionism appreciated people created their own worlds depending on their experiences and their language. They were individualistic, still with the scientist outside observing the person, a first order cybernetic perspective. They did not take into account the complexity of what happens between people in conversation, a second order perspective. The Postmodern/post structural movement in the 1980s including Foucault and others were concerned about how prevailing dominant discourses in society created power and then was used by those who had the knowledge as a means of social control. Foucault saw a reciprocal relationship between power and the way it works, and the control of knowledge and how this is used as a form of social control. For example, the types of discourse used in professions such as medicine helped to sustain the power of doctors, and in particular the power that their specialised knowledge gave them. The power of the discourses within politics to create social norms, rules and structures that must be adhered to and are lived out by the majority, begin to be seen as truths and punished or scorned if not adhered to. The media and internet also create dominant discourses about “terrorists”, fashion, wealth, individuality etc that give power to those that have the knowledge and resources, leaving many others feeling they should live and believe what they have been told, without an easy or questioning voice . Feeling outsiders.

Social constructionism took a very different path, that the understanding of our social worlds emerged through our interactions with it. They propose that reality is not exactly what is out there, but is mediated through social interactions and conversations. As Von Forster (1985) said -- “We do not *discover* our reality. We *create* our reality through interaction with others!” These are largely conversations

with others. The sense made of the interactions becomes knowledge that grows through a shared language. (Anderson & Goolishian 1988, Shotter 1993, Gergen 1994). This is not taken as a *truth* knowledge of how the world *really* is, but a socially constructed understanding of their shared conversations and experiences.

Gergen (2009) sees the worlds people live in as being constructed from within the relationships in which they actively live, the animated gestured coordinated actions within a conversation co creates the meaning and reality. Meanings are generated, expanded and disrupted through these co ordinated actions. Meaning, emotion, and differences emerge in the space in between.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984) stated our words are never ours alone they come with prior claims on their meaning and are then subsequently used in conversations with others where the meaning fits that contextual relationship.

Cronen and Pearce through their ideas within the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) has given us heuristic models of how we can make sense of the complexity of meaning making as Bakhtin suggested above “about prior claims” of words used within conversations both in the present and from the past.

Meaning is created through experiences, interactions and conversations between people in a variety of different contexts. Cronen and Pearce have described this well in their book on the Coordinated Management of Meaning . They propose that meaning is constantly being woven in an ever changing tapestry as a conversation is taking place, the threads are stories from numerous different contexts: Stories from society, now perhaps the world, stories from our cultures, religion, laws, feminism, ethnicity etc., from our families of origin, our peer groups, our autobiographies, and

to whom we are talking to and in what context. What is our definition of relationship to the person to whom we are talking and what is the episode of interaction that is taking place, as meaning is emerging at that moment. Which levels of context or stories that create a more prominent colour or create the emerging meaning and understanding is dependent on all these things in the moment of interaction.

Meaning is action

All these stories will influence how we give meaning and act in this particular instance. Moral orders or deontic operators of obligation, prohibition, uncertain or possible will get interwoven in the stories and will affect what we feel we can say and do in a particular context. The effect we have on others will either reinforce a meaning, weaken the meaning or create totally different meaning in the conversation.

For example, a young person talking to his parents may well agree that smoking is a crazy thing to indulge in and damages health, is costly, pollutes the air for others, etc. however when with his peer group he may well agree with them that it is a cool thing to do and in a smoky pub the only thing to do when drinking a pint. It is not that he is telling lies but smoking has different meanings depending on the context in which the conversation arises. Smoking with parents becomes prohibited but with friends the other stories are still there but new or different ones emerge in the conversation and context so that it becomes possible.

Thus, we cannot presume that there is only one story, there are always multiple, and that in conversation we may create new and elaborate different stories, so getting a different understanding of what others mean when they describe their worlds. As

Shotter says (1993, 1984) Human realities, meanings and understandings are negotiated and developed through the dialogic activities between people in their daily conversations and life. Shotter also focusses on the sense of accountability that people have or develop for their own actions, together with their ability to recognise the social consequences of those actions.(Shotter 1984) As above the young person shows accountability to the groups of people with whom he is engaging in dialogic activities.

Tom Anderson in conversation discussed the importance of looking *into* a word to discover its meaning. (Pettenasco 1995?) What does the word say to you? What is the word inviting you into (Peter Lang in conversation)

People live in these stories and are changed by the stories told. Questioning becomes part of the story creating process , less of a gathering information process

These meanings are our 'grammars' - the actions, emotions, moral orders and intentionality associated with the words we use. **Wittgenstein**.This idea can be used to construct a Linguagram for a client so that when trying to help someone we can begin to understand **their** meanings and actions rather than ones we have or professional dictionary definition meanings, where Foucault's power issues emerge.

There is a process we use in the way we Linguagram.

In doing a linguagram we make use of the technique of “mind-mapping” (Buzan) round a word or phrase of their choosing, that they or we want to understand or make sense of. Through questioning about the experiences or concerns they have, together we choose a significant word that is the centre of what we are about to explore. – That word could be Violence, Asthma, Stealing, Marriage, Mothering, Good parenting or anything that is relevant to the clients. We then write this in the middle of the page and ask lots of questions that bring forth meanings, actions, intentionality, moral orders and emotions about the word as they see it and use it.

Embedded suggestion questions can be very useful to bring out new possible futures for people with them taking responsibility for their actions as they have spoken the words in answering the questions. Possible advice having been given in the form of a question which can be accepted or rejected.

Every response is written up on the page with questions asked as to where it fits in their map or understanding. So we might ask – where do you want me to write this word, next to this one or another. It becomes a discovery of associations and connections. In this way the associations and meanings of that word are brought forth. The carriages that Wittgenstein talks about become other key words, the meanings of which can also be expanded. Abilities are spotted through this process – so one is looking at the ability to have friendships, loyalty, care, generosity, and dedication etc.

There are always stories within stories. There is a hierarchy of stories which are different for each situation. Linguagrams give another way of seeing someone else’s story and the questions allow the hierarchy of that story to change. It is interesting once you write up what is talked about it has an effect of reflection and association,

that enriches the stories told and again changes hierarchy of stories. This is why it is important to write up the linguagram with the clients as a joint, collaborative project . The importance of witnessing and having space to reflect and create associations is part of the therapeutic process of linguagramming.

Some linguagrams extend people's grammars on certain sets of skills -- parenting or mothering, Some create new and different stories which allow new stories to emerge and consequent different action.

All we do is explore and expand people's grammars, so we do not impose authoritarian/specialist knowledge ideas on others, these have often created the difficulties for which they are now seeking further help and have brought them to us.

We have been using the process of linguagramming in a number of different contexts. It has been very fruitfully used in somatic clinics where patients do not appear to be responding to medication and their symptoms do not respond in the usual ways. Joint clinics have been done in Respiratory medicine, neurology, dermatology and endocrinology. Some examples from the asthma joint clinic will be used as illustration.

We have been working in Norwich in a joint asthma clinic. This clinic was set up to try to help people who had near fatal asthma or asthma that did not respond to the usual treatment schedules

Linguagrams helped to elucidate and validate the story that was being lived by the person who had asthma or their family. We have focused on the meanings given to asthma and medication for patients and families because it is important we understand *their* meanings rather than presuming we are talking about the meanings (often medical) we associated with the words *we* use. Hardie surveyed what Americans, who had medically proven asthma, called their symptoms¹². There were big ethnic differences. The word wheeze, the medical terminology, was rarely used; raising the question how often asthma is missed by the physician or missed by the patient when they call it something different. Hardie found that Black Afro Americans used descriptions like: - "tight throat", "voice tight", "itchy throat", "scared", "agitated"; whilst Whites used slightly different descriptions: - "deep breath", "light headed", "out of air", "aware of breathing", "hurts to breathe". These findings demonstrate that at a very simple level if you ask people about their asthma, they may not know what you are talking about since they may call it something different. Thus it is often helpful to ask them what they call their symptoms. The problem also presents the other way around when patients with the hyperventilation syndrome or vocal cord dysfunction with wheeze call their symptoms and disease asthma.

Meaning depends on our life experiences as well as the stories we hear in our families, the media, society, culture etc. For example, what are the patient's personal experiences of having asthma; does anyone else in the family have asthma: what are their stories, what are the stories about asthma in society, and

what is said about it? These stories are put together idiosyncratically depending on the context in which the meaning is created or explored. Has the person been made to feel foolish, is anxiety generated during an acute attack, or has it been managed with confidence? Word associations, emotions, morality and intentionality are created in these stories and have been called the “grammar” of the word:

Linguagramming opens up the different power of stories, through questioning you can take away the power, and influence story in a different way. So there is a power to create new stories

In the more difficult situations we may have to try to understand the complexity of the story in the family. When looking for stories that create meaning, we will often look for the consequences of asthmatic attacks - who gets involved, what happens to the relationships between significant people? These are not conscious motives or behaviours but behaviours that fit the particular system. The questions asked are called behaviour effect questions -- what happens if? -- What happens when? - What next and what next? - What do significant others do? This allows insight into the patterns of interactions and conversations about asthma or medication. It helps unravel misunderstandings and makes sense of behaviour that seems senseless, as when some patients do not take prescribed medication in an acute attack or when others take too much. **Future questions**

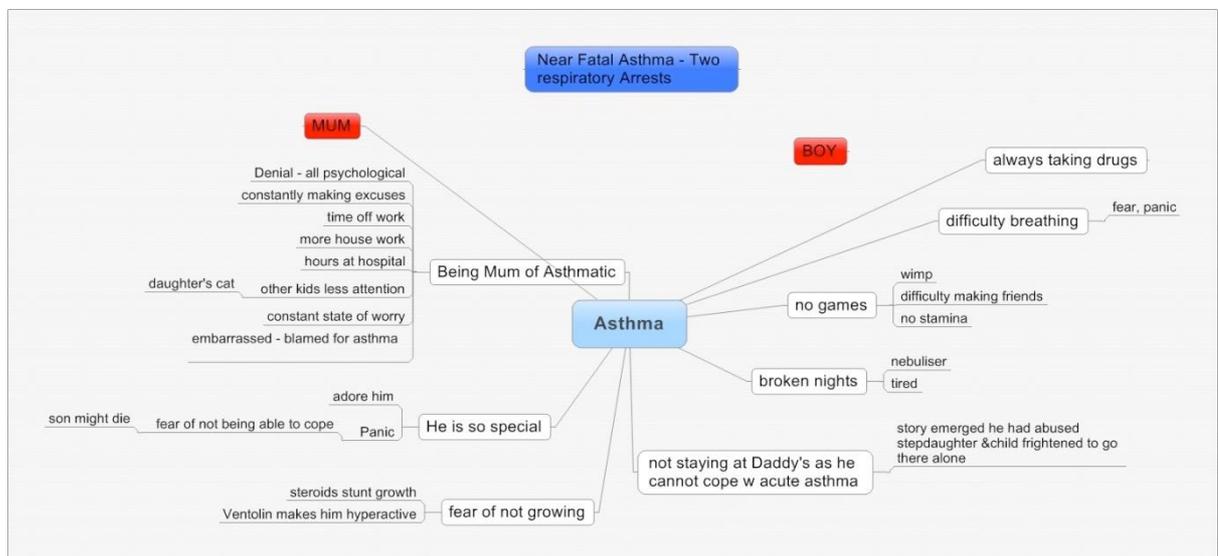
In instances where the asthma management is unsatisfactory from a medical position, it is essential to work within the language the patient's use. They are then

likely to be more responsive, and having been heard themselves, they are more likely to understand what the physician is talking about. Whilst trying to make sense of the meaning around the idea of asthma we may well explore the “grammar” of the word in a Linguagram as in diagram 1, where the meaning of asthma was explored for **Anna**, a very competent social worker, who was denying she had asthma and refusing all medication. By asking her questions about associations, meanings and emotions associated with the word asthma and whatever she called her symptoms, we got a clear idea of the meaning of asthma to her. By asking her for her dreams we can use these as the goals for treatment, as that is where their commitment to treatment and health will be. In this way we look for actions they would have to take to achieve their dreams. We also need to be aware of the other influential stories in people’s lives, their life scripts. For example, people seeing themselves as copers believe they are never ill and consequently may be reluctant to take medication

Anna was an example who sought help late, was a social worker who felt she lived for others and had a belief that she could not be ill because she had to be strong and capable. She had looked after her mother who had been chronically sick for years. As a child she had always felt responsible for caring for her siblings. When she developed asthma, she was reluctant to accept there was anything wrong with her. She would not take her medication and denied much of the severity of her symptoms. They were never that bad; she could manage and said she was only just a little short of breath. Her husband was also unwell and very dependant on her. She could not accept her medical problems until we explored her grammar of the meaning of being unwell and how the rest of the family could or would cope. Following these consultations she was able to accept that in order to care for her family, she had to look after herself. By going with her and then seeing a different way forward we could help her manage her asthma successfully.

Meaning of medication, asthma and the side effects of treatment A mother refused to give her asthmatic son any medication like **prednisolone (steroids)** when it was prescribed. She had read an article on the effects of steroids on children's growth. Her son was small and she felt the doctors did not care about the long-term consequences. She wanted her son to be a big strong lad, not stunted by medication. She would not believe that the doctors had considered the long-term effects or were interested in her son as a grown man. She politely agreed with everything that was said and then resorted to her own medication regimen. Meanwhile her son had two respiratory arrests and nearly died. He hated being an asthmatic and all it entailed, hated being a nuisance and his mother also was very fed up with all the extra care that was needed in his and the family's life.

Linguagram 1

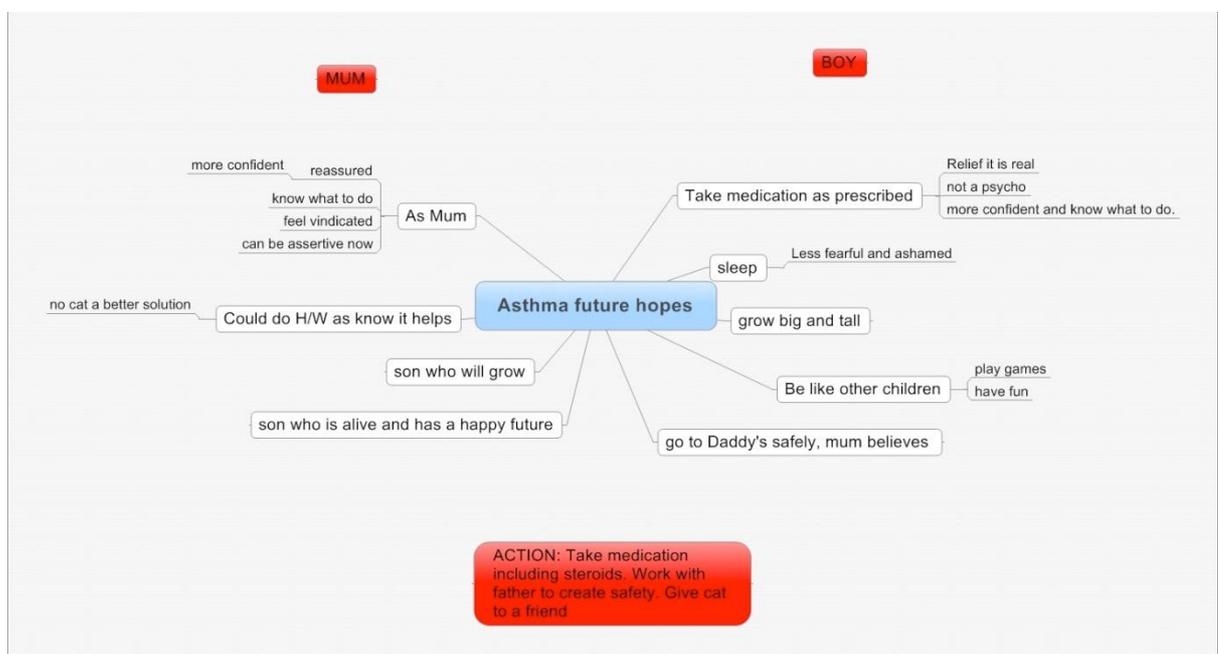


After we had explored the meaning of asthma to both son and mother, we were able to reassure her that if her son did not take the medication he was more likely to

remain small and we did weigh and measure him every visit and were also concerned about his growth. We also were able to reassure the boy that if he took his medication as prescribed he probably would not have the worries and difficulties he was at present experiencing.

We then did another Linguagram of their hopes understanding the importance of correct medication.

Linguagram 2



Meaning and how patients see themselves – asthma and copers

Asthma and death

A middle-aged woman's father had died of asthma when she was a child. She developed symptoms of asthma when her children were of an age similar to her own when her father had died. She became paralyzed with fear and refused treatment,

which resulted in recurrent admissions to Intensive Care. We explored with her the association with her father's death and what provision she had made for her children and her family, talking explicitly about her worries and fears. She then began to plan her life, take control of her asthma and move forward. Until some meaning and understanding of the situation is appreciated there is little hope of success in effecting an improvement. Through exploring beliefs about asthma and also the fears and worries concerning medication many families and asthmatics have been able to take more effective control.

Exploring the meaning and beliefs about asthma, often through linguagrams, has resulted in patients and other family members, exploring and beginning often to put words and meanings on their thoughts and ideas, feeling they are being taken seriously and their fears addressed, rather than being defensive about not wanting to accept a diagnosis or medication. Through this exploration they then can take the management of their asthma as their responsibility. The dominant medical voice does not and cannot take over so easily.

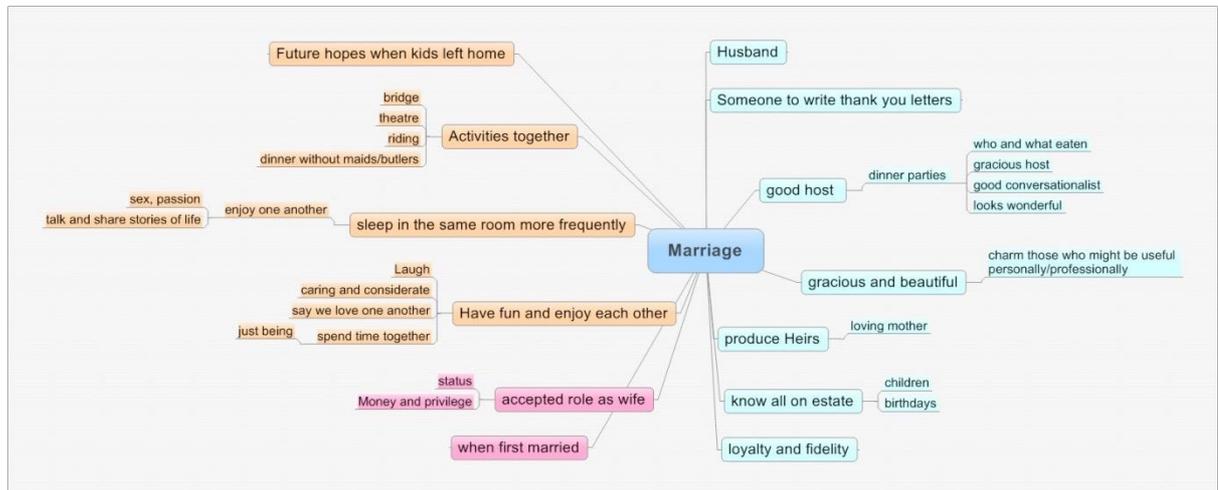
This approach investigates what has worked well for them, identifying their abilities and the strategies which have enabled them to cope; this focus enables patients to do even more. The danger of focusing on problems is that doctors and patients become experts in what does not work. Approaching the problem areas through asking what they would like to work even better and asking them to dream/imagine how they would like life to be, has proved extremely helpful. Living the dream not only outlines the constraints imposed by their asthma, but also helps them to see how they could manage their asthma better.

Linguagrams can be used in therapy or consultation in many different instances.

It is particularly useful when exploring words people think they have a common meaning for. For instance, we used it to explore the meaning of marriage with a couple that had adolescent children who were causing mayhem prior to leaving home. They were an upper middle class family and the children felt they were fine but that their parent's marriage was floundering. I started asking the man about what the word meant to him and for his association to the word. As he talked I wrote down exactly what he said on a large block of paper. He started by saying that it was having someone to write thank you letters, someone to do a dinner and guest diary, to be gracious, to organise their social life, to know the village people and their children and be aware of births and deaths to provide him with heirs, to be a loving mother. I asked him about love, sex and companionship and his reply was – oh yes all of those things too. I could begin to understand where some of the tension was coming from. So I decided to ask the wife what her ideas of marriage were when she first got married – she said they were very similar – she liked the status, the availability of money and she took all the things mentioned for granted. I then asked them both what their dreams for the future of their marriage would be now that the children were all about to leave home. She stated immediately I want to have fun together –“Doing what?” Horse riding together, playing bridge together, going to the theatre alone without always feeling we should take others. They filled out ideas of what they could do and how life could be very different and much more intimate and together for them both. The husband was a little over come with the passion with which his wife spoke but soon joined in with suggestions and we arranged another appointment. They rang and said they did not feel they needed a further

appointment as they felt they now had a strategy to look at things they wanted to explore and to plan their future lives together, practising soem of the things now!

Linguagram 3



Through drawing out the Linguagram the couple were able to see how they both viewed marriage. They agreed that when they first got married then much of what the husband had brought out was true for both of them. They had been married for 25 years and the husband did not feel the more human things were so important now. His grammar was of very low expectations of sex and communication as they had talked it all out!

However the woman was in a different position with the children having left home and she having re trained and feeling her second career was just beginning. She no longer had much energy left for the things that had mattered at the beginning of their relationship. She now wanted something different as long as some of the core things were there. Money and security were still very important to her, possibly more important than being together all of the time. Social status was still important for her.

By drawing out their grammars of what and how they each saw their marriage and what they dreamed of it in the future, they were able to begin to see what each might have to do to create the happiness for the other now that the children had left home. It did not become an issue of right and wrong but one of: this is how it used to be and this is what we would like it to be. What will we now have to do to fulfil some of our dreams and hopes we have for our relationship?

Previously there had been constant fights over the failure of each partner to act out the hoped for, even though the hoped for had never been made explicit. In this instance the wife talked about her dream of what might happen on her birthday. This was talked through in detail. *So you wake in the morning and what happens* – my husband kisses me and says happy birthday. He then surprises me with a present – *what sort of present?* Something romantic – what is romantic to you? A ring, some flowers, something he has put some thought and effort into. Some nice jewellery or perfume or article of clothing. *What happens next?* He makes me a cup of tea in bed. *Then?* Well – I leave that to your imagination! *Then what happens?* – We spend the day together. *Then?* He has booked a romantic dinner for just the two of us at a restaurant I like. *Which?* He knows – *But which restaurant would make you really feel he had paid attention to you?* The details of how to act were spelled out so the husband knew exactly how to act in order to create a good birthday. He had a path down which to walk.

Each partner was also encouraged to look for the abilities the other was demonstrating and commenting on them so that each began to feel new and emergent abilities were seen and appreciated. The old abilities and respect for what

they had had were also brought forth to give them a rich resource for all they had achieved together.

Good Parenting - using the ideas of the constituency of parents and also to include social worker's perspective on these questions which will open a conversation between parents and SW

We have done a lot of work with parents who have abused their children or have been seen to be inadequate parents by social services. Our work has been to create opportunities to increase their grammars so that they get new and different ways of parenting in the future.

We have used Linguagrams to do this – writing things up on a large flip chart paper so they can take it home with them and think about what they can do to feel more competent and proud of themselves and adequate for social services.

Linguagraming has been a way to get into the language and into the meaning and the ability-creation of what could be very useful for these mothers.

What does “good mothering,” mean to them?

What are the ideas of good mothering you might have?

What does it look like, how would you show it?

Caring

So if I were to show caring, what would I be doing? – And we would get something like:

Be very aware of the child, creating time, listening, giving, feeding, and clothing.

What does “listening,” mean? Giving time

What else might it mean? *I ask questions. I hear. I give attention, and take seriously what my daughter is showing*

What else does “good mothering” mean? Creating safety

So if you were to create safety, what does “safety” mean? And what would you have to do, to create safety? In the same way we would explore the differences, actions and meanings of safety.

We might also help mothers use the “constituency of other mothers” to get more ideas and resources as ways of interacting with their children.

When you see other mothers meet their children at school, what do those other mothers do? How do they behave as good mothers? *Some mothers will say: What have you done at school today? Some of them will hug their children.*

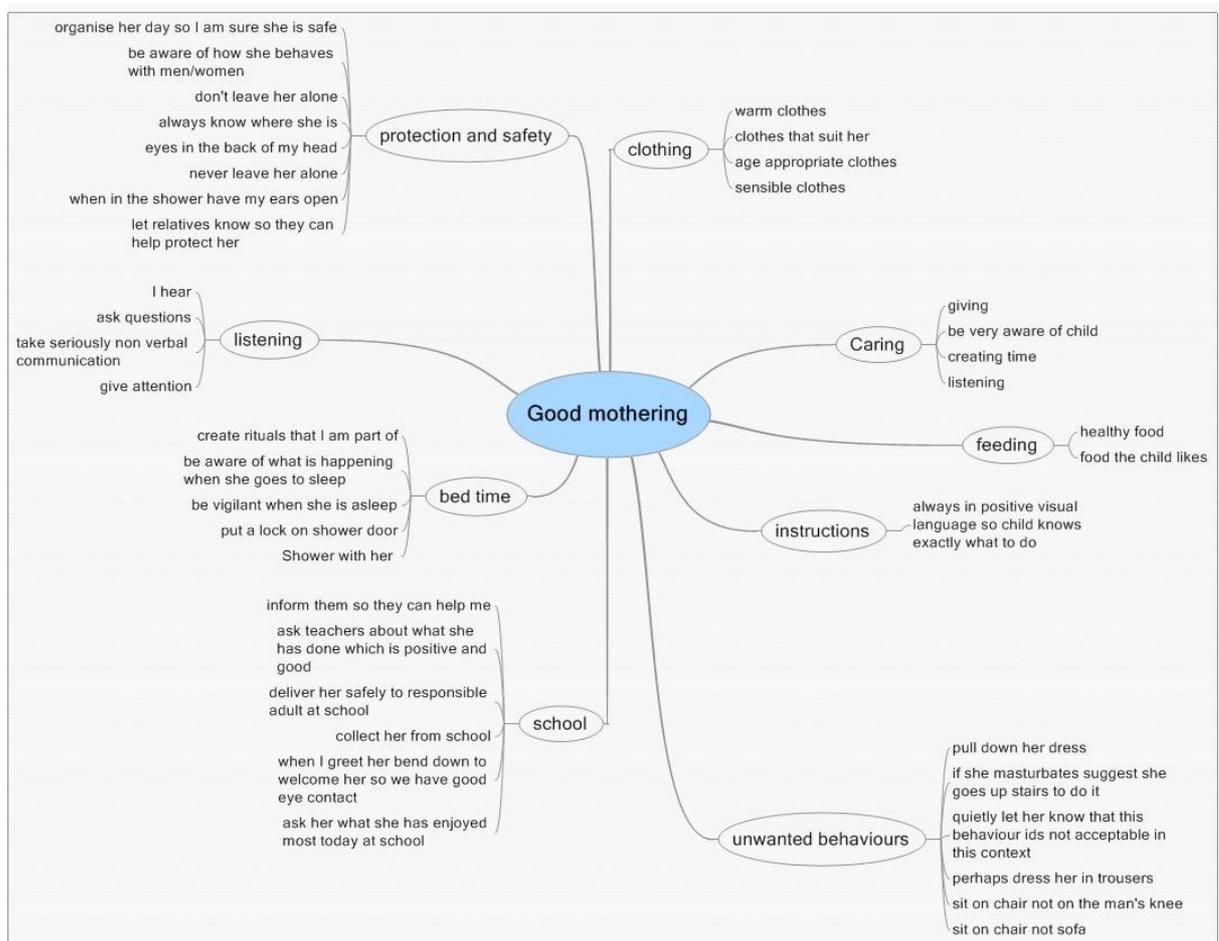
We might also suggest: “When you take your child to school tomorrow, observe what the mothers do and pick out what you see as good mothering.

In this way we are expanding people’s grammar and the actions they may take in order to create a sense of security, care, love, safety, for the children;. We are calling forth the actions necessary to create these. Mothering abilities are also created in this process giving a new identity to the mother. Doing this we think that we are joining not only the particular mother’s story, but also all the stories in our culture about “good mothering”? As individuals, we may have particular set of stories, but

what are all the other stories in the culture we can draw on? What other things do good mothers do?

Our culture is full of rich resources of stories of being good mothers, and how to do good mothering. So what are those activities? How do we show them? By calling on the richness of our cultural stories, we grow people’s identities by talking about what abilities they can live to show these stories in action.

Mothering Linguagram



Interestingly a number of unexpected things get created as new identities and actions begin to emerge:

Emotions get created by the new lived ideas and actions. When we have asked questions like how does it make you feel as a mother when you see your Linguagram? We have had responses like: *I feel good. I feel caring. I feel I'm doing something I really want to do. It is wonderful to do it well.* Intentionality and emotion gets created.

This process also bring out the moral orders As a good mother, what do you become obliged to do? What do you become prohibited from doing?

I don't leave my child alone. That's not something that good mothers do.

So moral orders can be identified through this process, by these moral orders, we are talking about things you are obligated to do, things that you are prohibited from doing, things that are possible, things that are uncertain. So we focus on the obligations and the prohibitions of stories about good mothering.

Why does this create possibilities for progress? And how do we let identities develop? In this we are using an idea from John Dewey. To paraphrase, he says: Do not think about identity as a thing. Think about identity as an active living process, "identifying the abilities of the self", and so the self grows. The self expands as the stories and actions that we are living develop and grow. As we get to know how to act, we will know how to go on.

Good parenting after acrimonious divorce

We try to see both parents together if at all possible and emphasis they need to focus on being good parents to their joint children, helping them see how they can put their children as the highest context and that every action as a parent needs to put the children first. We draw a circle in the middle, looking at the things they need to do as good joint parents.



We then may look more specifically at them as mothers or fathers; this can be done either together or separately. We focus on what they do well and how they live their values in their parenting. Looking at values that are still lived is an important part of trying to restore dignity in the parents as often when relationships break, values have not been respected or have been denigrated and it is in the restoring of values that helps temper the bitterness and allow respectful parenting.

Expand

The story of the skinheads

Several years ago we were asked to work with a group of skinheads who had raped an old lady, 70 years old. She nearly died. We used linguagramming to work in a situation where things had been done, things that totally contravene our moral

orders. How do you even begin to work with people when they have been the perpetrators of these sorts of things?

There was a request to see these young people because they showed absolutely no remorse. They had been in a juvenile borstal and were still saying: "Couldn't care a stuff" and shrugged their shoulders". We saw them about a year after the trial. Very little change or movement had happened. They had not shown any kind of regret or understanding of what they had done.

We requested to see the young people together. We felt it was important that we saw them as a group because the crime had been committed as a group and the group identity was going to be very important. We also requested the care staff observe behind the one way screen. I think they felt they were there for my safety and protection, but it was also so that they could be witnesses to any stories of new identities that might emerge and that they could later relate to these new identities.

We started with some small talk and quite aggressive banter as to what we were all doing there. Stating no one wanted to be there, but I was being paid to be there for 6 hours, so what should we do?

I asked: I'm curious: What do you call what happened?

They said: *We call it "violence"*

Ok, let's call it "violence" (I think they called it violence because this is what it was called at the trial.)

It was a one-way screen room with huge white board so I wrote up "Violence" in the middle of the board.

I asked them: "Ok, thinking about what happened, what did that whole event mean to you?"

I just wrote up their answers as they said them, creating a Linguagram. (This word was created by Tom Anderson at a conference at Petanescio, Italy, celebrating 25 years of the Milan team and after the presentation Tom suggested instead of a genogram this was a word-gram or Linguagram. The name has stuck and we thank him!).

They young people began to say things like: *"It was fun". "It was exciting". "We felt our voices heard". "We had an experience of solidarity, felt part of a group."*

Although it went totally against my moral orders I continued to ask questions to explore their grammar and moral orders rather than mine.

And what else do you get out of "solidarity or the group"?

We get an identity. We get a sense of belonging. A sense of being part of something. We feel powerful. No one messes with us

And what was exciting and fun about it?

It was on the limits. We were together. We were alive. We felt in control, powerful.

I spent about an hour and a half going through this in a lot of detail and asking questions like: Where do you want me to put this? Does this go with "Voices being heard" or maybe "We felt good", "We were laughing"? What else is there about "having fun?" or "Being on the limit", "Doing things you shouldn't do?" "Being dangerous"?

They began really to explore what they had done from their perspective in this episode. When I started looking at this, it almost would not have mattered *what* they had done, whether they had drawn graffiti, or shoplifted. Their idea was that it was a way of “having excitement,” “having fun”, they “were a group”. Being a group was really important. They were very “competitive” that was also part of the “excitement.”

So it became apparent and you could begin to see why there was no remorse. Remorse did not fit with this grammar. The emotions they were experiencing were “fun”, “energy”, and enjoyment”. The whole group really were beginning to get the idea of what they had been doing. They were getting very, very active, very alive.

The highest context for them was that we are a group and we act together and are utterly loyal to one another and obey the leadership moral orders. These moral orders that came out of the interview: “If one person were to rape this woman, out of group loyalty we *all* had to do it. There was no way we couldn’t”. So the moral orders of action and the intentionality of action were implicit in this story.

We also began to see that the consummatory moments in these actions which kept the group together had to be dealt with too – either to create alternatives or to create new moral orders. When a group acts so against social norms it is likely that the consummatory moments are at a much higher context and have to be understood and dealt with. If we look in a little more detail at consummatory moments and how to make sense of them so as to be able to find alternative ways of fulfilling them we need to understand the interaction with moral orders

Moral orders may obligate us or prohibit us from doing certain things. The other moral orders that are often evident in actions are the undecidable or unsure, where we do not know what to do in the context, and the moral order that it is permissible to

do something. Thus every action someone takes has intentionality and morality for him or her in that episode of interaction. It may well not be our morality, or a universal one, or even theirs in other relationships where there is a different intentionality. But still there is a moral order operating in every action. That morality merges as a consequence of an intentionality and the relational context. Often when that intentionality is realised there is a moment of “Yes, that’s it”. This has been called by Dewey a consummatory moment, an “Ah ha moment” that gives validation to the actions. Your identity is confirmed as a result of the actions; the identity story brings a recognition by important others.

We have found that unless we make sense and bring into awareness through language that intentionality, the relational context and morality which come together to create the all-important consummatory moment, it is very difficult to change behaviour and the way people act and relate. Alternative ways of achieving these consummatory moments are more evident when this is understood.

If we are critical and do not understand, then people become indignant; they defend or justify their actions if challenged or told they are immoral or behaving badly.

We very interestedly and sympathetically said we understood the power of group solidarity and a sense of belonging but the trouble with what they did was that they ended up in Borstal and potentially long term restrictions on their lives – so what could they do that might give them the fun and sense of solidarity that they were looking for. They burst into discussion amongst themselves and came up with the idea that skate boarding was the answer. It was dangerous, competitive; you had to follow the leader, be disciplined but daring. It was very exciting and dangerous, exhilarating. Before lunch they designed skate board parks that would create the thrill and consummatory moments that might provide more permanent change.

Our concern was how to begin to make them more aware of their own personal moral orders. There are a number of things we did. In a significant moment, we began to move on with them:

“Let’s look at the meaning of these words for this old lady.” We worked from this Linguagram using all the things they had talked about. We were simply saying: “How do you think it was for this old lady?” We took all the details of the answers they had given us.

We started with asking questions like:

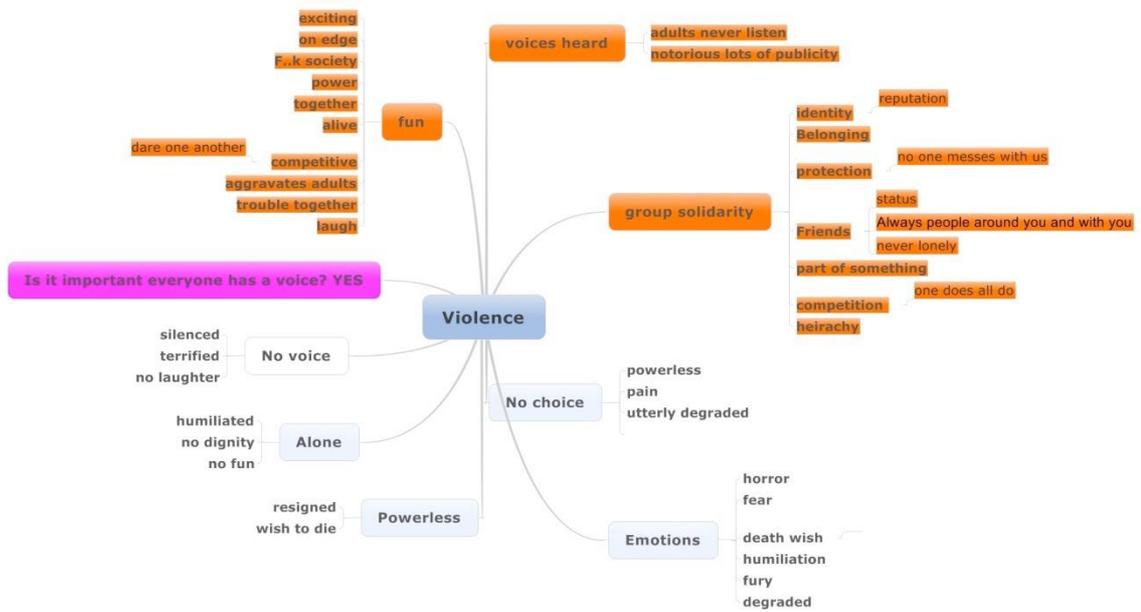
Was the old ladies voice being heard? *She had no voice· her voice was silenced.*

Was she having fun? What did she feel like? *She was terrified, she was screaming.*

Did she have dignity and a sense of group solidarity? *She was totally alone. She was humiliated.*

We had to be very patient and persistent, their answers were very slow in coming but we waited for them to answer so that they had to take responsibility and feel the emotion and experience what they were actually saying

This part took quite some time and the group was very much less energetic, silently involved. They were very reflective and thoughtful. Through doing this, we began given them a different story about what had happened. In this new story and grammar, they began to be able to show remorse, sadness, horror of what they had done. The change in the story for them was very dramatic.



I think if we were doing it today, we would do a very similar thing but then take it one step further, take it *into the future*. We would take it and create future with possible actions.

How would you see having fun in the future?

What activities would you get involved in so you enjoy yourselves?

How do you get your minority voice heard?

What would you do to uplift these other voices? They are not in the position like you.

What would you do to make her feel part of the group?

How could you value and give her dignity?

This is another way of getting involved with the consummatory moments.

Using Linguagrams has been a way we have been able to understand others' worlds and their actions from their idiosyncratic way of making sense of their relationships and stories. It has facilitated change and given understanding to why sometimes there might have been misunderstandings or arguments as how to go on in their lives, as illustrated in most of the examples given. Linguagrams have also been useful to broaden people's grammars of action – eg in the parenting examples where through questioning parents have begun to see new and different ways of doing things that they.