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Title - Language Games: A Productive Metaphor for Discursive Research?

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This paper responds to the conference's call for pieces that reflect upon where we are, and where we are going. As the field continues to assert its relevance as academic debates pursue issues such as 'practice' and 'materiality' (Hardy & Thomas, 2014), we argue that it is the field's ability to rigorously 'dissect' the multiplicity within the taken for granted that will latterly ensure the field's continued influence. While deconstructive analysis informs much of the field (Mumby, 2004; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014), the overt usurping of established ways of understanding can leave their audience without a basis for constructing alternatives Reed (1998). As an alternative, we explore the Wittgensteinian notion of "depth grammar" from his conceptualisation of "language games" as a means of unpacking the contested meanings circulating within an organisational context (cf. Holt and Mueller, 2011). To illustrate, we draw upon publically available 'experience reports' (a form of autobiographical reflective text) produced by practitioners of the Agile project management methodology. "Leadership" is a recurrent concern for these individuals, and their accounts' – consistent with their field more generally – reflect the term's ambiguity (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Blom & Alvesson, 2015). Our project, then, is to appropriate from Wittgenstein's own "struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language" (2009, p. 52, §109) a means to unpack the amorphous notion of 'Leadership in Agile teams'.

The full version of the paper expands upon the ideas behind Agile project management in order to frame the embedded tensions and contradictions that practitioners contend with as they account for their experience. We give details of the context of experience reports, justifying their use as a reflection of their author's organizational experience. The main body of the work, presents what Wittgenstein terms an "ostensive analysis" of these, which is to say that it aims to lead the reader through one's analytical process. In so doing we "describe" and yet leave "open to view" what is present within, and absent from, the material such that its outputs "neither explains nor deduces anything" (2009, p. 55, §126). The analytical process then is expressed not so much in distilling firm

essential conclusions, but in leading the reader through a descriptive account of illustrative language use which has illuminated part of the language games played around the terms "agile" and "leadership" in organisational contexts.

There was then a dissection and coding of the language surfaced to construct an approximate "depth grammar" of the key terms in operation. This "overview" of how we use the words that underpin practitioner rhetoric is rendered into a "surveyable representation" was constructed which organised the instances of use to facilitate an understanding of language use. The claim of "refraction" here is key, alluding to the imperfect nature of the picture and the inevitable transformation of what was observed through the author's particular lens. The aforementioned continuum does not serve to chart out binary options for expression which are rigidly held to; rather the diagram acts as a linguistic compass of sorts. In contrast with the comprehensive, detailed, yet bounded nature of a map, it is the freeform space of possibility and general direction that the continuum serves to chart. Acting as a "living" analytical structure, the framework is locked into a recursive relationship with the data it is used to unpick; generating insights that, in turn, enrich our understanding of the context and allow for further refinements to the frame itself. Mirroring the notion of language games, each continuum provides a reflexively honed organising logic to the analysis without positing a supreme or final meta-theory; "an order for a particular purpose, one out of many possible orders" (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 56, §130-132). In this respect the dimensions should each be regarded as paired hypothetical endpoints of a dialectical relationship. Explicit orientations and intentional focal points cannot entirely "overwrite" regular language use. Despite our desire for distinct, orderly patterns, grammatical inconsistencies still emerge and not all are significant or clear cut. Given the emphasis on real language use there is an inevitable element of variability which is never settled to one side. Going beyond the natural variability of ordinary language use, even the "intentioned speech" of one orator could potentially span the entire continuum, never truly focusing in one particular area.

The paper concludes with reflections on the method's potential as a means for opening dialogue with practitioners.

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