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# **How Practitioners Use CMM**

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**Summary of Research: June-  
December 2010**

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## How Practitioners Use CMM

In June 2010, three Fielding Human and Organizational Development doctoral students initiated a research project on how well CMM as a theory is put into practice: Romi Goldsmith, Lise Hebabi, and Ayumi Nishii. When we initiated this project, we were new to the world of CMM theory and practice, but we were impressed with how this theory resonated with what we observed in our work as coaches, organizational change consultants and group facilitators. We were struck by the usefulness of it in reinterpreting our and others' actions for better relationships. We were also in continual curiosity about how this was being done in the world in other settings. We speculated that Barnett Pearce and CMM have made a significant impact on practice in a wide array of contexts. However, the scope or breadth of that impact was not clear.

This paper describes some of the many ways in which practitioners are using CMM, with a view to making this information available to a wider array of CMM-ish practitioners. We conclude with some thoughts about the continued evolution of this community of practice. It is our hope that this work will serve to spark further discussion and research in the CMM community, and that it will provide a source of information for the design of learning conversations related to practical uses of CMM theory.

### I. Our Approach

The central research question for this project was “How do practitioners apply CMM theory in their work and personal life?” Our primary interest was to find out how organizational development practitioners and those in the helping professions used CMM to advance their work and practice with individuals and groups. What advice or lessons learned could benefit beginning CMM practitioners (such as ourselves) as we integrate CMM into our established practices and chosen fields of work? Secondly, we wanted to find out if people who use CMM professionally have found it beneficial in personal situations and, if so, how.

We chose to do qualitative thematic analysis based on individual interviews that were conducted based on a protocol designed for this project (attached as Appendix A). We thought

that individual interviews would yield more depth and insight into how people who express themselves in multiple ways professionally and personally use CMM in various contexts.

Interviews were mostly conducted by phone or other electronic media, although in some cases interviewers were able to meet face to face with their interviewees. Interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Barnett Pearce provided an initial introduction to the first list of interviewees by sending them an email advising them that we would be following up with a request for an interview. As new people were identified by participants as potential interviewees, in some cases the referring participant introduced the interviewer via email, and in others the interviewer contacted the new person directly and explained the source of the referral.

The interview protocol was sent to all interviewees as an attachment to the request for an interview. Participants were told that their answers would remain confidential, with the exception of three questions that were clearly identified in bold in the protocol and again verbally during the interview. The purpose of these three specific questions was to gather information that could be used in organizing subsequent learning activities.

The interviews were conducted in the period from August to October, 2010. Interviewers included the three project authors, in addition to five other Fielding Human and Organizational Development PhD students who had participated in the CMM Introduction class in the spring of 2010: Barton Buechner, Lisa DeSanti, Jo-Anne Clarke, Lee Ann Avery, and Sergej Van Middendorp. Interviewers participated in conference calls before the beginning of the interviews, to review the protocol and ensure a common understanding of the intent and approach for the interviews.

The data gathered in the interviews was compiled and analyzed in multiple stages. Interviewers submitted their raw interview notes in the interview protocol template, in Word format. We then restructured the data into a question-by-question format: all responses to question 1 together, all responses to question 2, etc. At this stage, all the data was stripped of identifying markers, except for those questions where we had permission to identify participants, both to ensure confidentiality and to minimize bias in the analysis. Each of the three authors then took a few of the questions and did a thematic analysis of the responses to that question, and

reported on that analysis in narrative form. Appendix B, while not showing individual interviews, does show the main themes that emerged for each of the protocol questions. Once we had completed this level of analysis, we reinterpreted the findings using the basic question structure of CMM:

1. What are we making together?
2. How are we making it?
3. What are we becoming?
4. How do we make better social worlds?

These questions frame the “What We Found” section of this report which includes a meta-analysis of the key themes of what mattered most from CMM from those we interviewed, as well as what was surprising and critical for the vitality of CMM as a theory in use. The Conclusion focuses on implications for moving forward, and more personal reflections on what we are becoming through this work.

A total of 33 people were interviewed. 35 people were suggested by Barnett Pearce as interviewees and 24 of those were interviewed; the other 11 did not respond or were not available to be interviewed within the project's timeframes. 19 additional people were recommended to be interviewed by the initial interviewees and 9 of those were interviewed.

Of the 33 people interviewed, most people had between two to four professional roles in which they used CMM; even though one role usually predominated, the richness and diversity of their contributions are not visible through a one-role keyhole.

- 14 Identified themselves first as academics or teachers
- 4 Identified themselves primarily as managers of organizations
- 8 Identified themselves primarily as consultants or coaches for individuals, groups or organizations
- 4 Identified themselves as therapists
- 1 Identified themselves primarily as a mediator
- 2 Identified themselves primarily in a public service role

All 33 interviewees had their connections to CMM and Barnett Pearce through reading his published works and papers, and five people mentioned that it was through his written work

where they first began their relationships with Barnett, even his wife Kim! What is striking about those who first learned about CMM through readings is that all followed up with further work on CMM and gained more in-depth knowledge with Barnett in workshops, conferences, talks, or seminars. Ten others stated that their relationship to CMM and Barnett Pearce began with workshops, seminars or conferences and then were extended through more reading, collaboration or participation with Barnett Pearce and CMM.

## II. What We Found

### A. What are we making?

Interviewees are using CMM to make better social worlds:

“CMM has given me ways of thinking and acting that have produced more positive outcomes. It offers ways of working that empower you.”

While they did not always state it directly, it was obvious that for many, CMM plays an essential role in helping them make a positive difference in their personal and professional lives. People who use CMM in practice have also seen the positive impact of CMM on others, even when they do not use it explicitly or in the foreground. As a result of using CMM, communities have been able to join in constructive dialogue, partnerships and families have grown and healed, conflicts in organizational settings have been resolved, and students have gained new insights into apparently intractable problems.

Practitioners use CMM to make a difference and they find that this theory can be relied upon to have a multidimensional difference in complex challenging circumstances. We found that the interviewees were most excited and intentional about getting this aspect across to us. The most dominant theme in all of our interviews was that CMM has changed them as well as the lives of people with whom they have used CMM. We attach their stories of change as Appendix C and cite some examples below.

Contrary to the communication transmission model where the purpose of communication is to get what is in person A over to person B, CMM emphasizes that communication happens as coordinated action and meaning and is made in full view, ‘out here’ as a co-creation between

and amongst people. Therefore, transformation and possibility are more concretely accessible for individuals as well as businesses. For instance, John Parrish-Sprowl shares the story of his use of CMM in working with a company where a third of the workforce were labeled as developmentally disabled, and the rest were hired off the street. The disabled group had been in institutions and all the experts thought they couldn't be functional in work or life. John says, "This company needed to teach employees how to make the [circuit] boards. By focusing and tracking the communication that furthered making the circuit boards versus the labels, all became full productive employees and functional in society with friends, shopping, etc. The company also achieved one million in on-time delivery with the quality expected. A profound moment was when a 40 year-old who previously couldn't feed herself started helping others to learn how to do the job."

People said that CMM allows for more possibility and difference-making because with each communication 'turn' (or utterance) there is a choice to make and a possibility to create something. With choice comes the question "for what purpose or benefit"? And it is from this realization that respondents said CMM is not a neutral theory, that its purpose is to assist in making a better social reality. Several of the interviewees used coaching modalities in their work, and the notion of CMM enabling people to see 'turns in a conversation' was often cited as an aspect of CMM that helped people realize their conversations and choices make a difference. Lydia Forsythe, Paige Marrs, Martin Little, Beth Fisher-Yoshida and Jan Elliott told us how they used the conversational triplet, serpentine and 'mapping' to help their clients see a pattern or how they got from 'there to here' in a conversation, as well as other choices they could have made. These (and other) models of CMM are not the heart of the theory nor of the practice, but they do make visible what is done in communication as well as what could be done.

Another dominant theme across all of the interviews is that CMM is used as an analysis frame of what is important to people in their connections with others, to generate learning and greater effectiveness in any social interaction. For example, Jonathan Shailor needed to quickly analyze a challenging situation with an inmate participating in a prison's Shakespeare project. An inmate got into an argument with a guard during a session and ended up storming out of the room. Jonathan used the daisy model in facilitating a group discussion with the inmates on what had occurred. He also drew also on logical force to understand some of the dynamics in the situation and to help him see how to repair it. He has also used this story as a teaching

example, reconstructing the episode with students and debriefing it, which generates valuable insights and the ability to think creatively about alternatives.

We were surprised at how much using CMM in multiple small ways would yield a big difference. We heard stories of the resolution of complex, sensitive, or intractable challenges about creating an office of Academic Affairs, providing services to depressed elder adults, management-labor tensions and social services workgroups (see Appendix C). In each story, the framework of CMM allowed the practitioner to work with people to surface their own solutions without sacrificing complexity or authenticity and without having CMM as the leading focus. The following example of Shawn Spano is a good illustration:

[Shawn] was invited to provide facilitation for a community meeting with local city government involving three groups: city council, the planning department, and the planning commission (volunteering residents). They had not been communicating well with each other and they had alignment issues among the three groups. In the meeting, he had each group talk about what they saw their roles were, how they saw their roles in relationship to others. This discussion was done in a fishbowl setting, in which one group talked among their members while the other two groups watched the discussion. The purpose of this intervention was to make them see how each group co-constructed their meaning and grew assumptions which did not surface. The design of the meeting and the questions used were guided by CMM principles, but he did not use any particular CMM tools. He saw his role as highlighting commonalities and differences in open, nonjudgmental, and explorative ways, and turning the conversation back to them on what they should do in order to achieve better understanding and coordination with others. The meeting was successful, with the participants generating their own solutions.

One person found that CMM helped him deal with an interpersonal conflict in a way that turned their relationship around. Instead of simply letting the situation be one of blame, he reflected on what he was making with the colleague:

“I like to have fun with my classes and a colleague who taught next to me didn’t. And my fun in my classes bothered him. We really didn’t get along. So I went about finding out what he thought good education was? He said that it had to: have rigor and be somewhat painful (so his story was one of rigor)—then I told him my story about how I thought people learned best with a certain playfulness mixed in with the content. We

both considered ourselves to be “hard” graders (he liked that). The result of this conversation is that he has stopped trying to make enemies with me and we respect each other now and enjoy levels of collegiality.”

Unfortunately, much of this work seems to be done in isolation; there does not appear to be a ‘self-conscious’ CMM community of practice. We found that many wanted to be in communication in different ways about using CMM as practitioners, including in-person interaction and the use of an electronic discussion forum such as the Daisy (<http://thedaisy.ning.com/>). People tend to work individually in their own practices, and with some exceptions, any sense of community appears to stem from the original learning experiences around CMM rather than continued connections as people use CMM in the world.

There is a scholarly community whose members interact with each other more or less frequently, although even that seems to have become a bit dispersed and disconnected over time. Those experienced and very conversant with the theory wanted to be in learner positions to grow and become more sensitive to and collaborative with others who use CMM as a practice more regularly. The scholarly community seems to depend heavily on Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen to take the initiative in connecting and convening them. We did not sense this was intentional, but rather a result of each person’s deep engagement with their chosen professional fields and communities of practice (e.g., therapists, mediators, academics, social constructionists, etc.). Some of the interviewees noted the existence of this community and acknowledged they were not a part of it (even though they might self-identify as scholars). We would also say that some of the participants had a vague awareness that a community could be nascent and needed, as they are facing a new horizon without Barnett and Vern at the helm generating activity, but the only tool currently in place to support a virtual community, the “Daisy”, is not being used effectively.

## **B. How are we making it?**

For many, CMM has become a way of seeing and thinking about the world; they use it seamlessly both in their personal and professional lives.

“I am never not using it. I have come to see the world through CMM. Although in my personal life I am a bit more unconscious about it, while in business maybe a bit more conscious. It is a mindset that finds its way into all these contexts. The strength is that it

wasn't developed as a therapy or specifically attached to any context. Even though I think it is more used in management than in therapy, it is applicable in both, and more."

As such, it was often difficult for interviewees to specifically articulate how they use CMM in practice. Other than in classroom teaching, the models are often used implicitly, without articulating for others the concepts or models that underpin the analysis of a situation or shape an intervention. There are some cases, however, where practitioners have integrated CMM concepts, such as hierarchy or episodes, into their professional vocabulary. An example of this was Jane Peterson's use of CMM to process a situation where she was in conflict with a colleague. Jane asked herself "What is the context?", and realized that her colleague was coming from an organization where he had to train people. She was able to shift the context from "colleagues" to an institution holder who talks to an employee. By putting herself in a different role, using the daisy and the context model, she was able to stand her ground in a positive way, stating and speaking about his needs and checking her own understanding and comfort.

We were also struck by how having CMM heuristics could also help others develop a professional vocabulary that allowed for more complexity and flexibility. Stephen Littlejohn facilitated an ongoing dialogue between management of an industrial plant and residents of a nearby town. The plant was built on the hill overlooking the village, so residents lost their pastoral setting, and this led to conflict between the community and the company. There was great concern about visible plume from the stacks, and stories began to get lived and then told about pollution. The company set up a working group to try to deal with the issues, with a two-point mission statement: improved dialogue, and continuous environmental improvement. He facilitated monthly meetings with them, using the LUUUTT model, the serpentine model, strange loops and the hierarchy to analyze and guide their conversations.

We cannot emphasize enough that practitioners thought CMM was most useful in combination with other theories, perspectives and practices, and how much they appreciated the big umbrella that CMM provided them. In many cases, CMM is being combined with other theories and models to become part of a broader "toolkit" on which practitioners draw at need. CMM combines well with family therapy, making the unconscious conscious, and with other social construction perspectives, where the hierarchy heuristic allows different ways of defining ourselves to become evident at all levels of analysis (individual, group, organizationally, macro,

etc.). Sheila McNamee shared this story that illustrates how CMM combines effectively as well as providing different levels of focus:

“I worked with Karl Tomm in the Family Therapy Program in Calgary. Karl would fill a board with strange loops, hierarchies of meaning, etc. with the therapy team during the intercession of a family therapy session – when the therapists went to another room after the first part of the session with the family. They then would bring back what they drew and discuss it with the family, pointing to how the knots the family was getting into with their communication was a function of the confluence of different contexts, and that the unwanted repetitive patterns (URP’s) could be ‘unknotted’ by seeing and considering the different contexts. This was a far more useful story for the family!”

The major advice to beginning practitioners was to apply it, play with it and use it with others. One person said, “You can use one CMM element in a conversation and that will make a big difference, you don’t need to use the whole theory all at once”. Another said, “be open and become comfortable with the ambiguity and mystery of people constructing reality together in communication, there isn’t ‘one right way’ to use it, and be sensitive to the clarity and confusion tension that emerges”. The CMM models that were most cited as useful for the beginning practitioner were the hierarchy, daisy and conversational triplet/serpentine.

Challenges in using CMM mostly occur when it is foregrounded inappropriately, or when practitioners allow it to distance them too much from the people and situations in which they are interacting. Other than in teaching situations, most interviewees talked about using CMM in the background; one person talked about getting feedback from her clients that describing the theory at the outset was “too academic”, and shifting more and more to using it in the background or explaining the theory after it proved useful.

### **C. Who are we becoming in the process?**

The transformational power of CMM shone through many of the responses, and a number indicated that they are becoming better, happier people, for example:

““1000% transformative: I am NOT the same person. I am more sensitive, forgiving, relaxed and I hope humble.”

Most people interviewed saw CMM as useful and beneficial for their personal growth and development, in their partnerships and with their family life. In terms of self growth, people saw that CMM has made them a better person which can be seen in the everyday as well as in how they deal with significant life-cycle events, conflict and the hopelessness of modern life. Their marriages are better because they are more aware of what they are creating with their spouse and how they contribute to it; their family life with children also benefits because they are better able to help their children deal with differences and difficulties, and see context and the impact of communication.

We were most surprised, struck and delighted with how important and contributory this theory has become for people who use it regularly and we could assess that best from people's stories of how they used it personally. Most engaging were examples of how people used CMM to navigate rough patches in their relationships with their parents or with their children. Faced with her parents' disapproval of her fiancé and at the same time loyal and committed to honoring her parents, Lilliana Rossman used CMM to frame a letter to her parents by sharing her contexts of commitment and her understanding of their contexts of empowerment to her as their daughter who could make wise choices and with values they passed to her she was able to help her parents relate to her in new ways and accept her fiancé as her husband. Children, whether six or sixteen, represent challenges to parents that demand creative answers. Jack Lannamann and Sheila McNamee shared the story of their needing to deal effectively with their first-grade son, enamored of swear words. Jack said he explained to his son that words make sense to use in different places and at different times, and that for swear words, the place and time was a closet, before or after school (not at school). So his son saw that he could go into the closet and say them any time and as much as he wanted, and also got that that words make sense in some, but not all places or contexts.

It has often been said that the research changes the researchers, and this was no exception. Through listening to how aptly others used CMM, we learned very practical ways of using CMM in our own organizational development practices (e.g., as consultants, coaches, facilitators and managers) and were encouraged to use it more. As one researcher so prosaically put it, “.... my CMM daisy has gained a few more petals that make me a bit stronger embedded in this beautiful part of the social world.” Like the many we interviewed, we too learned to “see”

things differently and to pause and maybe make different choices in how we respond and make together with the people with whom we are in relationship. We experienced this in writing this report as well as in our personal lives (where we might not have always chosen our higher self!). We were also surprised at how readily we were welcomed as colleagues in this scholar-practitioner community of CMM, and were struck by the authenticity and accessibility of the people we interviewed.

#### **D. How can we make better social worlds as practitioners with CMM?**

Most respondents were deeply engaged in their professional fields, and explained how CMM as a philosophy, perspective or worldview, and as a set of communication practices for co-constructing reality, was making positive and surprising impacts within the social worlds of which they were already a part. While we didn't ask specifically "how can you make better social worlds as practitioners?" we did ask about their interest in enhancing their use of CMM to make a continual contribution.

Continuing to learn and practice was at the top of everyone's list! Learning together was the top method cited, not in the traditional teacher-student model, but as scholar-practitioners.

"ANYTHING that keeps the conversation going is something I am interested in. As far as a 'training', I have more experience than most others, so I am not keen on a situation where the people training might not have as much experience as I do. But I love hearing about how others are using CMM differently because I find that people mold it to fit their current needs."

Since they perceive they already have a sophisticated usage of CMM, many interviewees focused more on sharing experiences and building on each others' ideas: using case study methods, hands-on practice, real-life situations and challenges in a variety of settings, contexts, countries, cultures and units of focus seemed most appealing. About half of the interviewees explicitly suggested a peer learning format where participants learn from each other. Interest was also expressed in connecting with each other outside of a formal classroom setting, either through the "Daisy" or some other virtual medium.

Great value was seen in actually being with Vernon and Barnett in terms of how they bring out the best in people, and it was with reluctance but with some maturity and recognition of 'carrying the mantle forward' that they recognized the need to stop relying on Barnett and Vernon's personal involvement to keep the practice of CMM alive and instead take it on amongst themselves.

To prevent CMM from becoming a boutique theory and practice that has seen its day, we think a focus on reflective use and showcasing of practitioner innovations could be promising. We also think there would be benefit in further exploring and modeling CMM in groups, and the qualitative difference of that experience from the one-on-one focus that is prevalent in the existing models. It may be that providing opportunities to learn together, using an interactive approach involving case studies, real-life examples and practical exercises, can help us move farther down that path.

### III. Conclusion

As this project draws to a close, we are grateful to all those who took the time to help us in this work. Barnett Pearce was a strong supporter from the outset; he provided advice on the interview protocol, opened many doors with his generous introductions, and gave us thorough feedback on an initial draft of this report. Professor Keith Melville also provided guidance on the research design and analysis protocol. And while the best way to learn how to practice CMM is to just do it, hearing about so many experiences has opened our eyes to a multitude of rich possibilities for using CMM in our personal and professional lives. As an example, the stories of how CMM is used in the classroom (see Appendix C) could also be adjusted and used in group trainings or dialogues within corporate settings as well as with public workshops.

When we started on this journey, we had a dual purpose of finding out how CMM is being used in practice, and of gathering information that could be helpful in structuring some learning activities related to the practice of CMM. We did all that and more, yet we also recognize that we have likely tapped only a small portion of how CMM is being applied in the world. There were many people on our list with whom we would have liked to speak, but with whom it proved impossible to arrange interviews. And we know from e-library searches that there are people out there who are practicing CMM in innovative ways, and whose names did not even appear on our lists (Buttle, 1994; Forbat & Service, 2005).

We were struck by the impact that CMM has had on many of the practitioners' personal and professional lives, particularly in those cases where they had integrated CMM into a holistic worldview that went beyond academic knowledge. And we were in turn touched by their warmth and generosity as they took the time to share their stories and help us grow in our knowledge and understanding of CMM.

There seemed to be a genuine interest, among those we interviewed, for ongoing connection with like-minded practitioners in order to grow and learn from each other. What is less clear, is the path to take to translate this interest into practical steps that will help build a sustainable CMM community of practice. We hope that a beginning and robust identification of next steps happens at the 2011 Festschrift at Fielding University's Winter Session in Santa Barbara January 11-15. One of the interviewers for this project noted:

“CMM is at once a philosophy of living as well as a communication theory that has some great tools for practice. This idea that CMM starts out as a tool but grows into a much more expansive and integrated approach to self development and conscious living is really intriguing... this question about how we get CMM to live in community rather than be a community waiting for Barnett is an issue”.

Like many researchers, we are humbled by how much more research there is to do on our original question. If a systematic search of “CMM in use” was conducted more widely, or even more specifically in some organizational development applications, a richer array of how it is used would likely emerge.

We also struggle with what appears to be a paradox between contradictory but complementary ends. On the one hand, to keep CMM alive as a theory in use, one can assume that its concepts have to be explicitly named, to be studied and taught. Yet CMM seems to thrive best as a practice when it is, so to speak, “invisible”, when the concepts are used without being named. Is there any way to practice CMM more overtly, without it losing its power? Why does using CMM in the foreground seem so difficult? Are there ways in which the concepts can be adapted so that they translate more easily out of academia and into the world of professional practice?

## Appendix A – Protocol Questions

1. Tell us a bit about yourself: what is your occupation? What is your connection to CMM and Barnett Pearce?
2. How did you learn CMM? What did you find most useful in developing your knowledge of the theory and tools?
3. What have you learned about using CMM in your work that would be useful for a beginning practitioner?
4. Tell us about your experience with CMM in your work and personal life: generally, how do you use it? (use checkboxes in the questionnaire, with comments)

- a. Where have you found it most beneficial and useful?

---

Business

Personal

---

one-on-one

group

large organization

---

facilitation

coaching

training

OD

mediation

Other

---

Foreground (talking about CMM and its models to clients or others)

Background (using it to inform your practice without mentioning CMM explicitly)

---

Analysis

Design

Intervention

- b. Have there been situations where it has not worked as well? In what contexts would you not use it? Please explain briefly.
- c. Are there some concepts or models that you find particularly useful? Which ones? Why?
  - i. Hierarchy Model
  - ii. Serpentine Model
  - iii. Daisy Model
  - iv. LUUUUTT Model
  - v. Strange Loops Model

5. ***Are there one or two particular examples that you would be willing to share as successful practices, to help others learn how to use CMM?***

- a. If so, please provide a brief description of the situation, how you used CMM, and what results you achieved (for now, only trying to get a brief overview).:
- b. What was the setting?

---

Business

Personal

---

one-on-one

group

large organization

---

facilitation

coaching

training

OD

mediation

Other

---

- c. Which model(s) did you use?

- i. Hierarchy Model

- ii. Serpentine Model

- iii. Daisy Model

- iv. LUUUUTT Model

- v. Strange Loops Model

6. What changes has using CMM brought about in you, as a person and/or as a practitioner?

7. There are many ways in which CMM is expressed and used practically in the world through work in the public and private sectors (and we thank you for sharing the many ways you have used it so far). We are interested in what is of interest to you to enhance your use of CMM.

- a. Would you be interested in additional training or workshops for yourself, and if so, what type of format would be of particular interest?

- b. Here are some options that are being considered:

- i. CMM Solutions: A two half-day workshop for consultants and coaches on using CMM skills in January 2011 in Santa Barbara

- ii. "Intensive Training" for participants who have had earlier introductions and a working knowledge of CMM: 9 month duration with three 4-day intensive face to face sessions. Each face to face intensive would include

videotaping and customized follow-up faculty coaching as well as other learning activities between sessions.

- iii. A possible “Mastery Series” like an advanced workshop learning program to enhance participants’ CMM skills: one year long with six 2-day in person sessions with online peer coaching and faculty support between sessions.

**c. *Would you be interested in participating in any of these options:***

- i. As faculty?
  - ii. As a participant?
- d. Do you have other suggestions to structure learning activities so that they meet your needs or availability?
- e. What content or activities would you specifically expect or hope to see in a curriculum?
8. One of the tools put in place to support a CMM community of practice is The Daisy. Have you found this useful in supporting your practice? If so, how?
- 9. *Who else do you recommend we talk to?***
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix B – Thematic Analysis by Question

### 1. What is your connection to CMM and Barnett Pearce?

All 33 interviewees had their connections to CMM and Barnett Pearce through reading his published works and papers, and five people mentioned that it was through his written work where they first began their relationships with Barnett, even his wife Kim! What is striking about those who first learned CMM by reading about it is that all followed up with further work on CMM and gained more in-depth knowledge of CMM with Barnett in workshops, conferences, talks, or seminars. Ten others stated that their relationship to CMM and Barnett began with workshops, seminars or conferences and then were extended through more reading, collaboration or participation with Barnett Pearce and CMM.

Six people mentioned that they had studied with Barnett Pearce and Vern Cronen at the University of Massachusetts, and those personal relationships also helped them to establish their careers and even a marriage between two of the interviewees. Ten people spoke specifically of Barnett's participation with them on their dissertation committees for their PhD's, often as Committee Chair or heavily influential in their work taking on new dimensions.

Four people spoke of their relationship with Barnett developing most significantly out of collaborations with him; academic, practical or in social action/public engagement work. Many others had collaborations with him and reported that their relations deepened, but not to the degree that these four did.

All those who were interviewed spoke of Barnett and of the many contributions he had made to how they thought and practiced. Throughout, interviewees spoke appreciatively and warmly of their interactions and experiences with Barnett. All people interviewed reported on the phenomenon of staying "in communication" with Barnett throughout many years, venue changes, life changes and theoretical incorporations. Staying in communication with Barnett meant to them that a certain vitality, wonder, engagement and fresh viewpoints were possible and evolving between them. One person spoke most directly of Barnett's ability to bring out the best in people and conversely added that Barnett was also very open to others bringing out the best in him.

Eleven people mentioned that in their current practice as a consultant/coach, academic, therapist or manager CMM is a part of their toolkit of theories and approaches, but did not identify CMM as the core of their resources. It was one among many like psychology, social construction, Zen, systemic, other communication theories or practices and narrative approaches to the human condition. Some playfully mentioned that maybe that disqualified

them from being in the inner circle, or not having ‘drunk the kool-aid’, but it didn’t diminish the contribution and gratitude they felt for CMM and Barnett Pearce.

A few who said they were with Barnett and Vern at the beginning of the CMM theory while they were students, and have CMM at core and ‘so in my blood’, now refrain from using the language of CMM in their work as they feel that doing so distracts, obscures or distances the phenomenon on which they are working with their clients/ students/ organizational systems.

## **2. How did you learn CMM? What did you find most useful in developing your knowledge of the theory and tools?**

While workshops and reading about CMM were mentioned predominantly, most also pointed to using the theory and to practicing applying the tools as most useful in building their knowledge of CMM. The opportunity to learn from others who knew the theory well, in particular Vernon Cronen and Barnett Pearce, was highlighted by many. Quite a few also mentioned the relevance of the theory to what they were living and observing in the world.

Here are some examples of what interviewees said:

- I wouldn’t say I have learned it; I am still learning it and I am slowly making connections and using it.
- I read the original book, was so enthralled that I went on sabbatical to U. Massachusetts to work with Barnett and Vernon.
- I recognized there was something true about CMM.
- I learned CMM by working it out with Vern and Barnett and all of us; constitutive and regulative rules, logics, etc. It was a very heady time, and the heyday because we were such rebels against the positivists in communication studies.
- I spent quite a lot of time with the strange loop model (from Cronen’s paper) with colleagues because I come across a lot of paradox and I have a natural tendency to see patterns.
- I find workshops with Barnett to be the most useful, and then personal practice in real life.
- The most useful thing is to use CMM in a variety of applications.
- What I find the MOST useful is in starting or taking everything with “the communication perspective”.
- Most powerful was working with Barnett, in regular conversation about what are we trying to do, what would be most powerful, just experiencing their work through Barnett and Kim’s writing

- I stayed with it, did workshops and KA's with Barnett, knowing there was something of value there. It's one thing to read it, but it is another thing to embody it, to make it a way you see the world.
- The basic view that a social world is something you are constructing and living in, and taking that concept to all the areas of my life. The other thing was having Barnett as a living model. Having someone I could actually see and look at and to hope that I could be working with it like that.
- What I found most useful was the use of CMM as a tool for inquiry, action and reflection upon conversations, in work as family therapist and organizational consultant.
- I used to ask CMM framework questions to myself, but now they are internalized and I use them automatically.
- Communication and the Human Condition: It is one of my favorite books and has touched me to the depth of my soul. This book launched me in thinking of "How do I embody cosmopolitan communication"?
- Some of the things I found most useful were the exercises. Reading CMM I was fascinated, but I was shocked about the effects in practice. I was really surprised how big a difference it made. It makes sense reading it, but so much more sense using it.
- Practice: CMM is a practical theory that engages the interrelationship between theory and practice.
- Reading; going to a lot of talks at UMass and countless hours of conversation at home with my wife.

### **3. What have you learned about using CMM in your work that would be useful for a beginning practitioner?**

The dialogic and philosophical heart of CMM has a dynamic of the social construction of reality with the following four questions at its core:

- What are we making together? In this situation what am I making? (I can make different choices!)
- How are we making it?
- What are we becoming in this? What are we anticipating or desiring that would change? What else would if that does? (Role of the future)
- How can we make 'this' better? Or how can we make better social worlds?

Apply it, use it, talk about it, play with it with others!!! CMM is both descriptive and actionable and allows you to inquire and extend. You can use 1 CMM element in a conversation and that will make a difference, you don't need to use the whole theory all at once. Be open and

become comfortable with the ambiguity and mystery of people constructing reality together in communication, there is not “one right way” to use it and be sensitive to the clarity-confusion tension that emerges.

CMM is a means of understanding the role of language and communication in the co-construction of reality; listen to the language you and others use and pay attention to what is socially constructed by it. With each communication turn there is a choice to make and a possibility to create something. Most of the respondents would say that CMM is a reflective framework for coordination, clarity, coherence, action, understanding and the appreciation of ***what is happening now.***

CMM is a way of analyzing communication by looking at communication not through it.

- Focus on the speech act and then you get to the stories that construct a reality...keeping in mind no story is ever finished...
- Writing helps to clarify ideas and track the sequences of the speech acts, episodes, etc. “CMM makes the invisible visible –communication is the medium, CMM is the dye to track”
- You can go from very simple models (Daisy and Conversational Triplet) to deeper concepts and models (Strange Loops and Deontic Logics).
- The visual use of tools is very helpful for clients because they are more receptive v. an oral description.

The Daisy helps people to understand how they carry other voices, other people and other interactions around all the time as well as realizing others do too!

The Hierarchy model helps people to understand systemic communication, hypothesize what could be driving action and how one story is dependent on another and that action will change the story. Organizational identities are related to hierarchies of meaning: process, content, relationship, and self.

For the organizational interventionist these concepts were echoed by several respondents:

- Successful organizations and good places to work depend on the context generated.
- Organizations are about clusters of communication and episodes and NONE are in isolation.
- Patterns of communication are called into being which you can observe.
- The interrogative form beats any other form of speech act for a coach or consultant.
- Know your audience and join with their language and idiom. Your use of concepts (without describing them) will be more effective because it will be easier for you to focus on the issue or goal your client wants.

#### **4. a) Generally, how do you use CMM? Where have you found CMM most beneficial and useful?**

A strong theme is that people use it all the time as it has been internalized and shapes world view. CMM also helps with connection and coordination with others as a help to social worlds that are not working well. The worldview that most people held was that reality was socially constructed and most noticeable in dialogue and the stories people live from and act into. CMM was seen as a lens through which to view how behavior creates or contributes to a situation as well as a way to hold different perspectives simultaneously and manage differences. CMM was seen as a flexible theory that can either be subsumed with something else (such as social construction), or include something else.

- “Becomes part of your story and how you see others’ stories”
- “Allows you to be ‘enmeshed and removed’ at the same time so it is a great asset to look at different perspectives at the same time”

Many people interviewed use it in teaching and research.

Notable aspects of the use of CMM were how it helps in viewing life with mystery, awe and curiosity as well as how people can connect and coordinate without assuming intimacy as the endpoint of relationship development.

An outlier theme was that CMM theory and practice could also give people an ‘anti-true believer’ method, for CMM allows for deconstructing social worlds and not putting everything into a framework.

The strongest theme of CMM’s use and benefit is in how flexible CMM is as a framework and how it combines well with other theories, making it ‘the most prominent and useful of all the social construction theories’. CMM combines well with family therapy, making the unconscious conscious, other social construction perspectives, and how the hierarchy heuristic allows different ways of defining ourselves to become evident at all the levels of analysis (individual, group, organizationally, macro, etc.). Using CMM allows one to see the micro in the macro and vice versa. The integration process of CMM was noted this way: “ at first, CMM is it, and then you start shifting it and recombining it with other theories and finally you are thinking on your own...” with CMM in the background and dealing with situations with new lenses.

The majority of respondents found CMM useful and beneficial in work and professional domains in learning contexts that involved one-on-one or small groups with either a facilitative, coaching or teaching role: teaching, creating academic programs and researching; providing therapy for new narrations; coaching; and in the design and delivery of consultations where other perspectives help intervene or soften conflict and allow for more desirable speaking and listening to occur amongst people. It is also noteworthy that CMM has been used successfully in organizational contexts and to forward community projects, help people create and sustain

new vocabularies of transcendence between churches, deal with perpetual organizational “shop gossip” and helped prisons and prisoners enact and reinvent their stories through myth and theatre.

Most people interviewed saw CMM as useful and beneficial in terms of self-growth and development, partnerships and with family life. In terms of self growth, people saw that CMM has made them a better person which can be seen in the everyday as well as in how they deal with significant life-cycle events, conflict and hopelessness of modern life. Their marriages are better because they are more aware of what they are creating with their spouse and how they contribute to it and their family life with children benefits for they are more able to help their children deal with differences and difficulties, see context and the impact of communication.

- Self Growth
  - In the every day
  - In choosing to talk about the world differently when I see how hopeless it is
  - To increase compassion enactments with unusual moves
  - Has made me more generous and outgoing
- Partnerships
  - Helps to form our “master contract” as spouses
  - Add dimensions to conflict for better living and working relationships
  - Awareness of what I am creating with my spouse
- Family Life
  - Generally in family situations
  - In life cycle events, like death
  - Helping my children to deal with tough situations like bullying or disappointment
  - Helping my children see context and the impact of communication; like swearing

Some people rejected the construction of the question as to where they found it most beneficial and useful in personal or professional life for CMM was a way of thinking about the world; as one respondent noted “my mind has been colonized by CMM”. If one had integrated CMM as a worldview, then you wouldn’t separate life that way and you would deal with whatever situation with your worldview it would inform your thinking and practice to suit the situation you were in at the time.

Many cited how useful and beneficial CMM was as a communication skillset that enabled them and others to look at communication itself and not through it, develop a WE perspective and experience of co-creation, help people see that their stories have brought them to NOW and now they could choose as well as emphasize the curious with the simple things that work;

listening and emphasizing the interrogative versus making a statement. CMM was noted to also help with managing difference in a conversation.

#### **4. b) Have there been situations where CMM has not worked as well? In what contexts would you NOT use it?**

In the main, a CMM perspective seems to help in every situation, both professionally and personally. Using the language people are comfortable with helps as does joining with them on the issue they are working on and talking with them about interpretation and making meaning.

The workability of using it has more to do with the skills/execution of the practitioner rather than the other person or the situation. Many people spoke of their mis or overusing it which takes their attention off attending to the evolution of the conversation at hand: By losing focus on the other person and the investigation, by not noticing critical moments and acting into them appropriately, by foregrounding the terminology, by imposing the communication perspective, by turning it into a methodology to be followed, by using it to psychologize the family or 'clientize' people.

University teachers thought it difficult to teach to students who were concerned more about their grade than understanding.

Specific contexts where people thought it was not to used are:

- In management or planning tasks because those rely on linear thinking.
- When people are in "incommensurate worlds", such as the Middle East, and do not want any sort of future together.
- In power situations and more formal ways of dealing with uneven power dynamics.

While CMM helps, it is not a panacea, for "you might better understand an unwanted repetitive pattern but it is still hard to get out of one!"

#### 4. c) Are there some concepts or models that you find particularly useful? Which ones and why?

Of the heuristics mentioned, the following table represents how many specific mentions were made of the models that were found to be useful.

Hier	Serp	Epis	LUT	Daisy/ Atomic	C-3	Loop	Circle Square	Logics	Rules	Game Playing	Pat of Commun	Stories
24	15	4	8	13	2	14	1	6	2	2	1	4

The Hierarchy and Serpentine were found to be the most useful because they offer they can be depicted easily as visuals and offered levels of transparency for the individuals and small groups with whom the respondents worked. Hierarchy and Daisy were also cited as the easiest for others to begin using in their lives.

Some interviewees were somewhat annoyed with this question, seeing CMM as a worldview and all its concepts and models combining to help people analyze, design and intervene with whatever situations they were in. Often it was expressed, “if you take the communication perspective, you stop thinking in terms of these models...”.

#### 5. Are there one or two particular examples that you would be willing to share as successful practices, to help others learn how to use CMM?

(See also Appendix C – Stories)

Most respondents agreed to share one or more examples of successful practices, and the range of examples provided was very broad, from large-scale organization interventions spanning many years, to one-on-one conversations with a child and even work on self. All of the core CMM models were represented in the stories shared with the interviewers; the daisy, hierarchy, serpentine, LUUUUTT and strange loops models were mentioned most often; the circle-square game and the conversational triplet were also mentioned as useful heuristics in a learning context.

Over a quarter of the examples were about effective practices in teaching CMM to university students, rather than applications outside the classroom. The level of description provided for the examples varied greatly; as expected, additional information may be required to flesh out the examples sufficiently for use in a learning workshop context.

The following examples illustrate the variety of stories told in the interviews:

- Drawing on the daisy, the serpentine, the hierarchy and strange loops in facilitating a long-term community dialogue

- Using the daisy and hierarchy models in helping churches find common ground
- Using contexts to frame a multi-year consultation project to increase collaboration between labour and management
- Using LUUUTT in facilitating / mediating groups in conflict
- Framing the collaborative design of an OD intervention using episodes and core CMM questions
- Drawing strange loops and other models in family therapy sessions
- Working with the serpentine in one-on-one coaching
- Using the hierarchy to frame a letter to a parent
- Using the hierarchy to analyze a conflict with someone from another culture

## **6. What changes has using CMM brought about in you, as a person and/or as a practitioner?**

The changes described by interviewees can be arranged along the following spectrum:

- A different way of seeing, increased awareness
  - “I am also more aware that many stories are happening at the same time with different contexts.”
  - “Seeing the world as socially constructed”
  - “It has made me more aware of the role I play and the responses to that from people.”
  - “Helped me see things more clearly”
  - “Better able to see & describe patterns”
  - “I am able to see more options, and be more mindful”
  - “I learned a very different way of looking at things.”
- A different way of thinking, a change of attitude:
  - “I don’t beat myself up. A lot of tendencies to blame another for his/her personality are reduced as what happens is mutually co-created.”
  - “I am more and more thinking in the language of ‘What are we making?’.”
  - “I also embrace the mystery and ambiguity.”
  - “As soon as I get dogmatic, I question it”.
  - “It's made me more intentional; if you know communication constructs social reality, you feel more responsible.”

“Movement away from judgment of self and others to a curiosity of how we collaboratively achieve this interaction/situation/relationship, etc.”

“Becoming much more intentional and mindful of the power of our conversation”

“much more curious about situations, much more mindful about the effects that my language use has on other people, consequences of how I speak”

“I don’t try to analyze every conversation, but I think the idea of thinking in pattern was what Barnett brought that was so liberating for me.”

“CMM and dialogical thinking guide my interaction and I keep them in my mind.”

- A change in how people act in the world, in what they say and do:

“I make conscious decisions to create situations and environments.”

“I’ve engaged students in dialogue groups.”

“it gives me words to describe ways of making distinctions”

“CMM has given me ways of thinking and acting that have produced more positive outcomes. It offers ways of working that empower you.”

“We have gone through a whole range of trying out different roles with each other... We would have been in more conflict if we hadn’t had the opportunity to ask: what are we making...”

“learning to take a reflective pause”

“I make more conscious decisions: ‘in order to’ pops up in my head and makes me act more conscious.”

“CMM helps me slow things down.”

“It has had an extremely profound effect in my own life and work: we make our social worlds, how we have the conversation is as important as what we’re talking about”

- Finally, a few people described how CMM has changed who they are:

“I am more integrated because it is a framework for living and helps foreground moral aspects of life.”

CMM “has made me a nicer, sweeter person”

“a very powerful impact on me and my way of being in the world”

“CMM has shifted my context to more of a facilitator-transformation practitioner and has given me an identity reified by it.”

“1000% transformative: I am NOT the same person. I am more sensitive, forgiving, relaxed and I hope humble.”

“It has become part of who I am.”

“HUGE shift from when I was young. Now I am more singularly influenced by needing to join.”

“It really has changed me, it’s hard to pull apart what’s CMM and what isn’t.”

“Before CMM, I was timid and that had a lot to do with growing up in a ‘right and wrong world’. It was enormously liberating to see the world as gray! And the super byproduct of this is that I am perpetually happy.”

## **7. There are many ways in which CMM is expressed and used practically in the world...what is of interest to you to enhance your use of CMM?**

A majority of interviewees responded that they are interested to keep learning about CMM in various ways. The ones who have been involved in developing CMM, in particular, expressed a high interest in expanding their edges and horizons, and to hone a more sophisticated use of CMM.

Wanting to learn different types of practical applications of CMM is the strongest theme among the responses, especially learning through case study methods and hands-on practice in real-life situations and challenges in a variety of contexts, countries, and cultures.

About a half of the interviewees explicitly suggested a peer learning format where participants learn from each other. Although several mentioned that they would prefer to be involved as faculty, not as a participant, half of the interviewees seemed to envision playing dual roles (faculty and participant) in workshops and training events as a great learning opportunity.

While some stated that the face-to-face experience is crucial, others recognized the value of long-distance and virtual methods of learning (Webinars, Forums, etc.) in order to address the challenges of geographic dispersal of CMMers.

As many of the interviewees work in academic settings, some expressed an interest of developing a course for graduate students (rather than or in addition to training for themselves).

Non-training interventions were also suggested, such as “Reflection Teams”, where team members would act as coaches to each other to reflect, develop ideas, and support each other in using CMM in real life situations.

## 7. a) Additional training or workshops for yourself, in what type of format, etc.?

Interviewees were asked to react to three proposed options for learning activities:

- i. CMM Solutions: A two half-day workshop for consultants and coaches on using CMM skills in January 2011 in Santa Barbara
- ii. “Intensive Training” for participants who have had earlier introductions and a working knowledge of CMM: 9 month duration with three 4-day intensive face to face sessions. Each face to face intensive would include videotaping and customized follow-up faculty coaching as well as other learning activities between sessions.
- iii. A possible “Mastery Series” like an advanced workshop learning program to enhance participants’ CMM skills: one year long with six 2-day in person sessions with online peer coaching and faculty support between sessions.

Interviewees’ expressed varied preferences; while some (eight interviewees) did not explicitly indicate their preference among the options and one showed no interest in any of them, all three options were relatively well received among those who did indicate a preference. The first option had a slightly higher rate of interest, with 14 people selecting it, compared to 9 interviewees selection option ii and 12 selecting option iii. A concern expressed with options ii and iii, despite a fairly high level of interest, was related to the required commitment of time and resources, as well as scheduling issues and travel costs.

The CMM community is blessed with many experienced and willing faculty candidates. The following individuals would consider playing a role of faculty in CMM learning programs in the future:

Beth Fisher-Yoshida, Christine Oliver, Darrin Murray, Gerald Driskill (initially a participant, and later a faculty), Irene Stein (maybe), Jack Lannamann, Jan Elliott, Jeff Leinaweaver, Jeremy Kearney, Jesse Sostrin, John Chetro-Szivos, John Parrish-Sprowl, Jonathan Millen, Jonathan Shailor, Liliana Rossmann, Linda Blong, Lydia Forsythe, Martin Little, Paige Marrs, Shawn Spano, Sheila McNamee, Vernon Cronen, (Kim Pearce) - not now; maybe sometime in the future.

The following additional suggestions were made by interviewees:

- Including somatic practice and multi-layered activities would help learning stick.
- Use practical hands-on activities, sharing problems and experiences and having participants act as consultants to work on these examples, and doing interventions with each other (role plays).
- Share CMM experiences as case studies and include enough debrief on those studies.
- Take a step-by-step approach to explaining CMM tools.
- Using the same situation, illustrate how different tools might be used, either separately or together.

- Spend enough time on practice and activities after explaining theory, models, and tools. Conversely, giving participants activities first and then providing theory is also good.
- Provide opportunities to obtain feedback on real-life client situations.
- Videotape Barnett, Vernon, and Kim (interviews and conversations) and use the videoclip in the training or use it as interview series.
- Do analyses of social and political discourse for creating better social worlds.
- Conduct sessions as pre-conference workshops (such as Conferences by National Communication Association)
- For academics, from mid-May through mid-August is a better time.

Content or topic areas in which interviewees expressed an interest are:

- sophisticated level of logical force
- history of CMM and its development
- hypothesizing tool
- models and tools for working with couples
- coaching
- conflict management
- performance
- supervising
- leadership
- prison inmates
- spirituality
- qualitative data analysis (for academics)
- how to link across different tools
- CMM as collaboration and communication tools for design teams

More than a few expressed that they would like to see CMM expanding its edge and finding new directions, new tools, and new applications. Wanting to see and develop new frontiers is one of the themes. Bringing somatic aspect (nonverbal and embodied way of CMM), suggested by one of the interviewees, can be one of the examples for a new horizon for CMM.

In addition to the above content areas, some showed their interests in learning “how”. This includes how to train CMM most effectively; and how to use CMM tools explicitly in coaching or training situations; how to balance explicit explanation and implicit engagement of CMM.

## **8. How useful is the website the Daisy (<http://thedaisy.ning.com/>) in supporting your practice?**

About one third of the interviewees knew about The Daisy, although most indicated that they have not used the site as much as they would like to, mainly because there has not been too much activity there. According to one respondent, it used to have a practical purpose (planning sessions at Fielding national sessions), but since then the intentions on how people will use the site have not clearly developed. Despite this, one respondent suggested that the group should keep seeking out CMMers and CMM practitioners and welcome them so that it doesn't become a closed group.

Many of the interviewees said it is a good idea to be able to connect to other CMMers via a CMM forum site such as the Daisy. One interviewee stated: "Sometimes I think CMM is so connected to Barnett that we tend to sit back and wait for him to say what should be done. The Daisy could help in us becoming more of a community and to inspire each other to take our own roles. I think we should honor Barnett by moving on. Let it be a living community instead of a community waiting for Barnett." People expressed the Daisy has potential for many different uses and it can be a just-in-time support group as well as the place for sharing experiences and client cases.

The following suggestions were made to improve the site:

- Password protection to allow members to share client cases securely.
- Video clips to add vitality to what is essentially a text based exchange forum.

## **10. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

A number of people took this opportunity to offer additional comments at the end of the interview. Some expressed their appreciation for the interview, saying it had been fun or enjoyable. Others told of their support for the project, or expressed their curiosity as to the results or hopefulness that this will help take CMM further out into the world. There were requests for a copy of the report and for information on eventual training that would come out of the project. One person commented on the cultural differences between Europe and North America, as context for how CMM is used.

## Appendix C – Stories

### CMM in the Classroom

**ARTHUR JENSEN:** Uses an activity to help students become aware of making social realities. He asks students to select a social phenomenon on campus and describe how that phenomenon is created, sustained, or altered (“made” and “remade”) through the communication process. The goal of this exercise is to “see” communication at work in a phenomenon that is largely taken for granted as “already in existence”. Several students reported “ahh ha” moments when they could see how “my” behavior contributed to a situation, and that we live in a co-created reality.

**BETH FISHER-YOSHIDA:** In a class on reframing conflict, where she introduced CMM to students, the Daisy model helped one of them process a painful experience. The student drew a daisy with two petals fallen off, which captured her sense of loss related to two of her own students having been taken out of her class. Being able to tell the story and frame her experience with the Daisy helped the student achieve emotional closure.

**GERALD DRISKILL:** Builds from one model to the next undergraduate and graduate students, often starting with the circle square activity to help them transition from the transmission model to social construction. He has students enact an unscripted role-play, for example between a social worker and a homeless person, and finds consistently that they fall into a circle square pattern because he has scripted only roles: the social worker moves into helping.

**JACK LANNAMANN:** Uses the circle square simulation game with students to talk about undesirable repetitive patterns (URP’s).

**JEREMY KEARNEY:** Provided an example where a program leader interviewed a student in front of the rest of the class, who acted as a reflecting team, about a situation at work in which she was experiencing frustration. The reflecting team identified “strange loops” in the set-up and operational procedures that put the student into conflict, and that was held in place by the higher contextual level of relationship. The group then played out both sides of the loop using the empty chair technique from Gestalt therapy. As the student moved back and forth between chairs or positions, other students were invited to ask questions or offer suggestions within the framework of appreciative language or curiosity. A month later the student reported

that she had expressed her concerns at work, and this had led to her being hired to reorganize the process that was causing the problems.

**JESSE SOSTRIN:** Used CMM in a business training capacity with a small group of 30-32 people. It was a two-hour Senior Peer Counselor training with people 55 yrs old or older that were in a 72 hr training program so they could go into homes of elder adults and help those elders with depression. The audience works with clients facing dilemma after dilemma. He talked about strange loops and unwanted repetitive patterns (URP's) and that hit home to the point that people were going away from the problem-solving mode to a more empowerment mode of working with the elders. People liked the workshop and have invited him back.

**JONATHAN MILLEN:** Uses the notion of conversational triplet in teaching mediators the concept of intervention. He has them role-play and then map it out and analyze it: How could you respond differently? What shape would the communication have then? What could limit it? How could you make different responses?

**KEVIN BARGE:** In providing training to managers, he talks of the role of stories in sense-making tools. He facilitates an exercise using a standard case or one that is generated by the group, then takes the LUUUUTT model, and breaks the larger group into smaller groups: one group lived stories, one told, one untold, one unheard. Each group generates their stories, then in plenary they look at the different angles and how they fit together. He also works with the serpentine model to break things down in reconstructing a problematic conversation, trying to identify where a move could have changed the course of the conversation, e.g. bifurcation points, and also tracing through with questions: "When you speak in this particular way, what does that invite, how would a person react?" etc.

**KIM PEARCE:** Had a class previously that had difficult behaviors. She had engaged them in several conversations about openness, trust and respect, and some students were not accepting that invitation. A point she got very angry and yelled one of the students who interrupted while another was presenting. She used CMM to frame a debriefing of the incident, asking the class "How does a burned out teacher get made?" Then she took some time to recreate the events of that class and what was being made, and students got it in ways they had not before.

**LYDIA FORSYTHE:** Uses the LUUUUTT model in a simulation of an operating room situation, taking people back into a space of recall, a space that is familiar. She tells them to stop and interrupt her at any time, if it reminds them of a story, relationship, etc. and to talk about it, because the stories are important. The focus is on developing a better relationship as team members, and this approach helps take away the hierarchical barriers, since anyone can speak at any time, people from all different walks of life, and have their story come forward. Gives them time to develop their relationships in a positive way.

**THILDE WESTMARK:** Asks people in small groups to review a concept and think how it might be useful for them, then has them present the concept or model, and questions them about their applications. She finds this helps them make connections between their everyday life and the concepts, to really work with them. This practice was introduced after people provided feedback that they liked the course, but could not use it in practice.

**VICTORIA CHEN:** Has students practice the application of CMM in various settings, such as family setting, social-racial setting, communal setting, and organizational setting. Students interview each other with a CMM approach and analyze the situations with CMM. With this practice, often in family conflict situations, they get a good understanding of what is happening.

## **Practicing CMM in Other Professional Settings**

**ARTHUR JENSEN:** As an administrator, used the hierarchy model, episodes and conversational flow to set up an Office of Academic Affairs, and to create instruction modules for complex processes such as the Tenure and Promotion Policy. He deliberately used the serpentine model to construct the outlines, and used prefigurative forces to generate productive discussions about the process, about what is allowable and not, and the positive and negative implications of getting rid of something.

**BETH FISHER-YOSHIDA:** In a coaching situation, used the LUUUUTT model to explore stories her client lived by; her narratives, explanations, and rationalization of the way things were, which included stories of discrimination, glass-ceiling, conflict and culture clash. They together mapped out what was actually taking place, and the assumptions and interpretations, and also used the Daisy to explore her ethics and values. This work helped the client to expand her

thinking and develop skills to see situations differently. She could see how her certain image or perceptions were supporting her interpretation and creating the reality she sees, and she started to be aware that other stories existed. The work helped her shift her energy away from trying to control everything to letting go a little, which used to be very difficult for her. She also became able to receive information from others differently; as information rather than as accusation.

**CHRISTINE OLIVER:** Used CMM to explore a coachee's narratives about his role coordinating and mediating activity between traders and researchers in a credit management company. The analysis revealed an oscillating, unstable pattern whereby in one episode he would feel micro-managed and in the next he would feel abandoned, interpreting their treatment of him as bullying yet feeling no entitlement to comment on the pattern. He believed this pattern was a cultural phenomenon, not just peculiar to his experience. The coachee decided that he would take a courageous step and share his insights with the senior team and invite them to work together on thinking about how to change the dynamic. With regard to his own behaviour, he made the decision to neither 'give up' nor to anxiously engage but he began to realize that if he acted with confidence even when there was an environment of instability, the message he gave both his team and his CEOs would be more likely to facilitate a constructive spiral of communication and morale.

**DORTE LUND-JACOBSON:** worked with a large organization in Sweden where there were huge stress levels even leading to psychosomatic symptoms. She was brought in to help them find ways of lowering their stress levels. She used the Daisy model to try to capture the many conversations and discourses that were taking place in the employees' lives. They were feeling guilt over the obligations they had with parents, friends, and colleagues and trying to be "Good" to all of them. This allowed them to see what forces in their minds were fighting for priority and allowed them to "push back" on work. Each person did an individual analysis and examined their complex and individual story.

**JAN ELLIOTT:** uses CMM when co-creating design with others. She finds it very powerful to do things like work with the turn, and "What are we trying to make and create here?" For example, in an ongoing project where the team is committed to learning how to work together across traditional boundaries – federal government, NGO's – when she is working with colleagues on design of sessions she explicitly encourages that they consider the "turns in the conversation".

The kinds of questions she asks include: we have 5-6 turns with the shared leadership table between now and March, what are we trying to create / to call forth? After one of the turns, “What did this call forth?”, “What showed up in the conversation?”, “Have we missed critical moments or bifurcation points?”

**JANE PETERSON:** used the hierarchy model in an indirect way to process a situation where she was in conflict with a colleague. She asked herself “What is the context?”, and realized that her colleague was coming from an organization where he had to train people. She felt the way he was working was imposing on her individuality. She was able to shift the context from “colleagues” to an institution holder who talks to an employee. By putting herself in a different role, using the daisy and the context model, she was able to stand her ground in a positive way, stating and speaking about his needs and checking her own understanding and comfort.

**JEFF HUTCHESON:** In work related to his dissertation, focused on finding common ground between churches. Church delegations were getting stuck in politics of “how” things were being said, missing opportunities due to politics; groups were looking at meaning first, then trying to coordinate. He used CMM, primarily the hierarchy and daisy models, to help them “flip” this and look at coordination first, and a new vocabulary of transcendence, different than “win-win”, was created though using the CMM tools.

**JEFF LEINAWEAVER:** uses CMM with narrative and identity construction, and combines it with theatre in improv exercises to help demonstrate turns in dialogue, slowing down and observing the patterns.

**JOHN PARRISH-SPROWL:** shared an early story of working with a company where a third of the workforce were labeled as developmentally disabled, and the rest were hired off the street. The disabled group had been in institutions and all the experts thought they couldn’t be functional in work or in life. This company needed to teach employees how to make the boards. All became full productive employees and functional in society with friends, shopping, etc. The company also achieved one million in on time delivery with the quality expected. A profound moment was when a 40 year-old who previously couldn’t feed herself started helping others to learn how to do the job

**JOHN PARRISH-SPROWL:** Consulted in a factory to help create a more collaborative climate in a heavily unionized environment (UAW) where three previous consultants had failed. After getting union endorsement, at the first meeting with management and the union he had them all introduce themselves, and this was something they had never done before. A key part of the project was to create a cadre of leaders as facilitators, similar to a reflective team, that would help the Team Leaders conduct effective meetings. He did not use the hierarchy in an explicit sense, but was attentive to contexts within contexts, for example younger members of the union and then subgroups within that.

**JONATHAN MILLEN:** Used CMM to find patterns in conversations between Chinese people who had English as a second language, and who would switch between their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> languages when conversing with other Chinese people. They found that when this occurs, the person was using their second language to say something that would not be appropriate in the cultural idiom of the first language [e.g., saying “shut up” for instance, to your wife as it would ALWAYS be taken as very insulting and rude, even if said in jest.]

**JONATHAN SHAILOR:** used CMM to analyze a challenging situation with an inmate participating in the prison’s Shakespeare project. The inmate got into an argument with a guard during a session, and ended up storming out of the room. He used the daisy model in facilitating a group discussion on what had occurred, not only debriefing with inmates but also performing for the guard. He also drew on logical force to understand some of the dynamics in the situation, and to reframe the behavior of the guard and the inmate, as well as his own behavior. This analysis helped him see how to repair the situation, and he has also used this story as a teaching example, reconstructing the episode with students and debriefing it, which generates valuable insights and the ability to think creatively about alternatives.

**KAREN BENTLEY:** Refers to CMM as the “Swiss Army Knife” that she used to analyze what was going on between all of the players in a “big, complex system” of public policy in Georgia, which included property owners, elected officials, power company officials, and citizens.

**KEVIN BARGE:** As a consultant, he helps practicing consultants doing their Masters’ theses reflect on the interviews they conduct. They do exercises where they bring him a piece of tape, and they explore the turning points in the conversation, what that tells them about how the

conversation unfolded and how it could have gone differently. This helps them look at their practice differently.

**LYDIA FORSYTHE:** Uses the turns in a conversation in her coaching work, because a lot of the patterns come from that. She tells people they have the ability in every turn of the conversation, to change the direction; they can take it anywhere, they don't have to be on that train of the unwanted conversation. It's an aha moment for people, particularly if you talk through a specific example: "if I said this, then, if I said that instead, then".

**MARTIN LITTLE:** As an organizational consultant, he sees his role as creating space for people to figure out how they got from here to there in conversation. With his presence, people are more careful and conscious of what they do, how they act, what they say. It creates a space for reflection because people have to take more time and not just go through the motions. It also creates an energy of creativity, where people try new things – even small things – and they tell him "I would never have done that before". As a result people start to ask what else we can create.

**PAIGE MARRS:** Used the serpentine in a one on one coaching situation with someone who was ranting. She said, "let's see what happened in the saying..." and began drawing it in a serpentine pattern, providing a third person perspective.

**PAUL CACCIA:** Using CMM to hone a long term developmental relationship comprised of specific small incidents, using CMM heuristics to assess: "What is most important here? Where is the sense of oughtness here?" He uses it strictly in the background, but finds it useful to get an angle on the situation. He reconstructs the conversation purposely, mapping the steps, but not in an overt way.

**SHAWN SPANO:** Was invited to provide facilitation for a community meeting with local city government involving three groups: city council, the planning department, and the planning commission (volunteering residents). They had not been communicating well with each other and they had alignment issues among the three groups. In the meeting, he had each group talk about what they saw their roles were, how they saw their roles in relationship to others. This discussion was done in a fishbowl setting, in which one group talked among their members while the other two groups watched the discussion. The purpose of this intervention was to

make them see how each group co-constructed their meaning and grew assumptions which did not surface. The design of the meeting and the questions used were guided by the same principles as CMM's, but he did not use any particular CMM tools. He saw his role as highlighting commonalities and differences in open, nonjudgmental, and explorative ways, and turning the conversation back to them on what they should do in order to achieve better understanding and coordination with others. The meeting was successful, with the participants generating their own solutions.

**SHEILA McNAMEE:** Worked with Karl Tomm in the Family Therapy Program in Calgary. Karl would fill a board with strange loops, hierarchies of meaning, etc. with the therapy team during the intercession of a family therapy session – when the therapists went to another room after the first part of the session with the family. They then would bring back what they drew and discuss it with the family, pointing to how the knots the family was getting into with their communication was a function of the confluence of different contexts, and that the unwanted repetitive patterns (URP's) could be 'unknotted' by seeing and considering the different contexts. This was a far more useful story for the family!

**SHEILA McNAMEE:** Many years ago, did a consultation for a holistic health care center which had various services and practitioners under one roof. Begun as a very alternative approach to wellness by people who were all friends, it had become a challenging workplace where they hated each other. She started the session by asking the 25-30 people to introduce themselves professionally – their position AND what attracted them initially to their profession. Her thinking was that if they could tell their stories of who they were professionally they might get their sense of self back as professionals, using the hierarchy of 'who are you and with others'. The introductions were full and people even started to acknowledge other people in the room who had helped them and contributed to them over time...by the time they were finished with the introductions, they all looked at her and said, "You're done now, you earned your money, we can now discuss what we need to and don't need you. You can go home!"

**STEPHEN LITTLEJOHN:** He was called in to work with a workgroup that was highly conflicted, in the zone of harm, 16 co-workers in a social services agency. He began with assessment interviews with all employees, one hour each - using LUUUUTT. They could tell their stories, which developed a sense of trust and safety, but he also gained some insight into their interaction patterns by using the serpentine indirectly. He concluded that they could not

achieve coordination within the constraints of their stories - they had a dysfunction that led them to interrupt. They needed a new conversation with different stories. At first he used a planning conversation to get them to interact more productively, and that worked at first, but the group did not talk about the "elephants in the room" and this was something we needed to talk about. In a second phase, he co-designed a more direct intervention, asking them to explicitly address the serpentine - it was a struggle, difficult for them to go there. He used go-rounds, highly structured questions, with strong facilitation, in four or five three-hour sessions on specific issues that they generated. It was very transformative, they liked it so much they didn't want to get up. This was an especially good case because there was funding for one year, there was time to do the work.

**STEPHEN LITTLEJOHN:** He facilitated an ongoing dialogue between management of an industrial plant and residents of a nearby town. The plant was built on the hill overlooking the village, so residents lost their pastoral setting, and this led to conflict between the community and the company. There was great concern about visible plume from the stacks, and stories began to get lived and then told about pollution. The company set up a working group to try to deal with the issues, with a two-point mission statement: improved dialogue, and continuous environmental improvement. He facilitated monthly meetings with them, using the LUUUTT model, the serpentine model, strange loops and the hierarchy to analyze and guide their conversations.

**VERNON CRONEN:** Worked as a consultant to therapists dealing with a patient who had a pattern of being admitted, improving, then being released and regressing again to the point she had to be re-admitted. He worked with the treatment team to lay out the episodes, and this allowed them to punctuate them, understand some of the triggers for her behavior, and identify how they were contributing to the pattern.

**VERNON CRONEN:** Coached a manager who was having challenges managing the performance of his executive assistant, who had been a star in the secretarial pool but couldn't seem to function effectively in her new position. Through interviews, they were able to see that the secretary was caught in a strange loop, where her boss was asking her to give orders to others but she came from a strong family tradition where you don't boss others. In the end she started constructing a new way to represent the family – she could be a generation that was more than the previous ones.

**VICTORIA CHEN:** In the Cupertino project with the Public Dialogue Consortium, she used CMM along with system inquiry in order to improve the quality of community. The series of events included working with city managers and city councils, a town hall meeting with citizens, and follow-up community meetings.

### Using CMM in Personal Settings

**GERALD DRISKILL:** Is exploring the playfulness in CMM in his role as a parent, and has definitely found it empowering, for example when his son told him "it seems like you're getting angry because I was angry". He also tries to write stories with his children, and is currently creating a story with his daughter in an oral tradition. Not only can we empower, but we can reflect on and imagine interactions we're not part of now; this is an important function, perhaps not explored as much.

**JACK LANNAMANN:** Found CMM useful in dealing with his son when he was in first grade and fascinated with swear words. He explained to him that words make sense to use in special 'places' and his place for those words was a closet – so he could go into the closet and say them as much as he wanted, but nowhere else. He got it that words make sense in some, but not all places or contexts.

**JONATHAN MILLEN:** Uses CMM skills to intervene between his two teenage children when they are arguing. He tells them "in communication you have choices", "how could you respond differently at this moment – and what would happen if it did?" Sometimes this just frustrates them more, but it does definitely change the direction of the conversation and they are able to see that their disposition to blame is usually flawed, and how they contributed to the condition.

**LILIANA ROSSMAN:** Used CMM to frame a letter to her family of origin when they objected to her marriage. By sharing her contexts and her understanding of their contexts, she was able to convince them to try relating to her in a different way, and in the end they accepted her husband.

**LINDA BLONG:** Recently used CMM thinking and models (Hierarchy, Serpentine, LUUUUTT, bifurcation Point) to help her sort out a difficult work situation and make decisions. The

situation involved a variety of people, and she had some colleagues who understood CMM and helped her reflection. The LUUUUTT model helped her identify some of the stories in which she was participating and which she was constructing by the way she was talking, and some of the stories which were constructed without her around. It also focused her attention on what she had invested in her stories, and reminded her that she had opportunities to reconstruct the stories and tell some untold ones. Linda also used the serpentine model to look at the situation sequentially, and to notice how things had been evolving over time; talking about the sequence helped other people see it too. The hierarchy model clarified her decisions by making her highest context explicit, and bifurcation points also helped inform her thinking: “what particular points of this emergent situation were pivotal?” and “what might I have done differently?” With this reflection, she realized that one of the bifurcation points occurred months before some of the more difficult situations she was experiencing.