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Coordinated Management of Meaning: Extensions and Applications

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As CMM approaches its thirtieth "birthday" it seems an appropriate time to try and bring together an overview that reflects on how it has developed, explores the extent of its current influence and considers some future possibilities. Therefore we are grateful to Peter Stratton for providing the opportunity to edit this special edition and his encouragement and assistance in putting it together. We would also like to acknowledge our deep appreciation of the authors of these papers and the independent reviewers who undertook considerable work and provided many constructive suggestions to both authors and editors.

We were deliberately vague in our initial invitation to participate in this project; we asked only that the authors write about their own "applications and extensions" of CMM. They have richly rewarded us for creating an open space in which to display their diversity in style as well as in content. You will learn something about CMM from these papers, and, more importantly, you will be brought into contact with a goodly company of practitioners and scholars who are applying its insights to a wide range of issues.

When it came time for us to arrange the papers, we were struck by how each paper is organic to the work of the author. We wondered, briefly, about organizing this issue around clusters of papers that used the same CMM concept(s), but the papers reminded us that CMM isn't used that way. Rather, CMM is a way of looking at/acting into the world in which different concepts and tools are called forth by various situations. As you will see from the table of contents, we sorted the papers into "extensions" of CMM through research, through applications to specific settings (education, community work, organizational consulting and therapy), and through conceptual development. Half a dozen other organizing schemes would have worked as well. For example, look at the thread of a postmodern "knowledge" that connects Fuks' and Barbetta's papers; at the emphasis on creating openings for reflexivity that connects Fried Schnitman's and Oliver's papers; at the theme of cosmopolitan communication that runs through Rossman's, Kim Pearce's and Oliver's papers; the notion of dialogue that connects Fried Schnitman's, Chen's and Adams et al.'s papers; etc.

We were very keen to include a diversity of voices in this special edition and to encourage contributors to speak from their own unique contexts. Therefore, the range of the "forms of life" of the contributors has delighted us. Counting both national origins as well as where they currently live and work, 10 countries on four continents are represented. The authors include communication theorists, researchers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and consultants. So while some contributors might see their primary work focus to be that of a theorist or researcher, and others might see it to be a practitioner, all the articles provide theoretical reflections and draw on practice applications and examples to "show" CMM at work.

Within the overall bounds of an "academic" journal, we have purposely tried to encourage a variety of writing "styles" so as not to privilege one form of writing or type of voice over another.

It seems to us that this is particularly well reflected in contributors' awareness and attention to their different cultural contexts and the influence this has on their use of CMM. The writers from South and North America, like those from the UK and mainland Europe may make connections to different historical, theoretical and practice traditions but each has found a way to do this that creates a "fit" with CMM that is innovative and relevant.

Research is the common theme in the first three papers. Kevin Barge and Barnett Pearce provide what we think is the first of its kind, "A reconnaissance of CMM research," bringing together strands of research that have been long forgotten or not previously related. This review should be of use to all those writing scholarly papers using CMM concepts, as well as providing a history of the data supporting the use of CMM. It ends with challenges for those doing research in the CMM tradition. In a delightfully ironic and provocative essay "Remember the Alamo: Cosmopolitan communication and grammars of transcendence," Liliana Castañeda Rossmann obeys the injunction to "Remember the Alamo" but does so in a way that explores how the jingoistic aspect of this and similar monuments can be transformed into cosmopolitan communication through a richer understanding of collective remembering. Nalla Sundarajan and Shawn Spano present a case study of "CMM and the co-construction of domestic violence." They show that openings for successful intervention are created when violence is conceptualized as co-created rather than as something that one person does to another.

Many of the contributors are educators, and three turned their attention to that context. Jeremy Kearney describes the process of "'Making up' a masters programme: CMM and the co-construction of teaching and learning processes in time and space." This account includes both a description of the program as a whole and some of the specific techniques that lead students to reach their goals, as well as exploring some of the implications of attempting to consciously co-construct an extended teaching program. In her essay "Reconceptualising teaching: Using CMM to change rules and relationships in the classroom," Kimberly Pearce focuses on a single performance-based college-level class (rather than a whole Masters programme), showing how "the communication perspective" and "cosmopolitan communication" can be used to restructure the relationship between teacher and student and, in doing so, make teaching and learning more enjoyable. Allan Holmgren's "Saying, doing, and making: teaching CMM theory" is a wonderful account from the front lines of training. It not only describes some of the basic ideas in CMM but also shows some innovative and accessible ways in which these concepts can be taught.

Two papers focus on work in communities, in very different ways and in different continents. Saúl Fuks' paper, "'Craftsmanship of contexts': An as yet unfinished story of my connection with CMM", describes how his learning of CMM, particularly the hierarchy model, enabled him to develop himself as a "craftsman" of contexts in his work in a community organization in Rosario, Argentina. Of particular value is his presentation of specific ways of working that shifts a community from modernistic to a social constructionist concept of knowledge. "CMM and public dialogue: Practical theory in a community-wide communication project" by Carey Adams, Charlene Berquist, Randy Dillon and Gloria Galanes describes part of their on-going work to provide opportunities for members of the public to engage with others, including those with whom they do not agree, in constructive communication about the needs of children in Missouri

communities. Of immediate use to anyone working in public, they describe how their initiative blended with those of other groups and caused them to re-think their original assumptions and ways of working based on experiential learning.

Chris Oliver's paper on "Reflexive inquiry and the strange loop tool" is a welcomed report of her continued development of the concept of "social eloquence" and "systemic eloquence" (see Oliver, 1996), playing off from her encounter with appreciative inquiry. She focuses organizational consultants' attention on the space within interpretive acts, using the tool of strange loops to create the possibility of reflexive action.

The context of therapy is described in two challenging essays. In his paper, "The name of the deceiver: Foucauldian readings of MCM (anagram of CMM)." Pietro Barbetta continues to develop what he previously (Barbetta, 2001) called the "left wing" of CMM. His paper is allied with the postmodernists' struggle against the tendency of modernists to transform things that are truly mysterious into mere puzzles to be solved. He sees this struggle embodied in one of his clients and, in a fascinating case study, describes his attempts not to diagnose but instead to honor her somatic protest against being diagnosed by an array of professionals intent on doing so. As Barbetta brought CMM into conversation with Foucault, Dora Fried Schnitman engages CMM and Bakhtin. She finds in Bakhtin's dialogism resources for therapists and describes how they have led her to develop "Generative instruments of CMM," that will be of immediate use to those interested in helping clients re-author their stories.

The final section of this issue contains three papers that extend CMM through conceptual development. In "Something old, something new: CMM and mass communication," Vern Cronen reflects on the development of CMM's analytic model, including regulative and constitutive rules, the hierarchy model of actor's meanings, the serpentine model, and the notion of logical force. After describing how these concepts have evolved from the time they were originally proposed, he shows how they can be applied productively to mass communication. Victoria Chen notes that her colleagues in critical and cultural studies often dismiss CMM because it does not foreground the concept of power. In "The possibility of critical dialogue in the theory of CMM," she first argues that CMM concepts provide the basis for addressing issues of power and privilege, and then describes a particular instance in which "critical dialogue" occurred. CMM was developed in the context of a meta-theoretical debate in the communication discipline in the mid-1970s which seriously posed – and gave a wide variety of answers to -- the question "if we had a theory of communication, what would it look like?" Kevin Barge's essay, "Articulating CMM as a practical theory," is a critical assessment of how well CMM has fared according to Cronen's (1994; 1995; 2001) description of the characteristics of "practical theory." He concludes by issuing three challenges for practitioners using CMM.

Beginning with research moving through practice and ending with conceptual developments, each celebrating successes as well as calling attention to tasks yet to be done, this special issue is filled with examples, ideas, and practical applications. We believe that it will challenge the thinking as well as inform and inspire the practice of those who read it.

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