**TITLE:**

**Cultural Model Theory: Shaping a New Anthropology**

**ORGANIZERS:**

Giovanni **Bennardo**

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We request support for a workshop titled “Cultural Model Theory: Shaping a New Anthropology” to be held in Dekalb, IL at Northern Illinois University on July 15-18, 2021 (?). The workshop intends to bring together a number of international scholars from Europe and the US to assess the contribution that cultural model theory is making to anthropology and how this contribution has the potential to shape the future of the discipline as a whole.

Since its inception at the beginning of last century, the major goal of anthropology has been to discover, describe, and understand people’s knowledge used to generate their behavior, in other words, their culture. This knowledge is rooted in human evolution, in the artifacts that humans left behind, in the institutions that humans built, in the languages that humans speak. The work of Boas, Whorf, Mead, Bateson, Goodenough, Levy-Strauss, Tyler, Spradley, and D’Andrade (to mention a few) contributed to start constructing a picture of that knowledge. In the 60’s, once the cognitive revolution rushed on stage over the ashes of behaviorism and cognitive science was born, anthropologists were necessarily considered crucial contributors (Casson, 1981, 1983; D’Andrade, 1981, 1989; Dougherty, 1985; Spradley, 1972; Tyler, 1969). Several decades have passed and the goal of anthropology has not changed. However, practices to access human knowledge have not been internally generated. Currently, some of these practices have been appropriated not from linguistics and/or psychology or other sciences, as traditionally and often done in the past, but mainly from other humanities, e.g., literature, philosophy, the arts. This radical mutation has made a large part of the discipline venture into an ocean of interpretative protocols traditionally navigated by a different type of scholars.

In the last three decades, an approach to culture more in line with the history of the discipline has emerged and it is called Cultural Model Theory (CMT) (Shore, 1996; Strauss and Quinn, 1997; Bennardo, 2018). The foremost assumption of this theory regards the concept of culture as mental knowledge shared by members of a community. A community need not be territorially based and could be any social group that recognizes itself as such and espouses a shared identity, including groups that are internet based. In addition, this constitutive knowledge is organized into a number of mental models that are called ‘cultural models’ because as components of culture they must also be shared. The adoption of CMT entails a methodological path as proposed and described by Bennardo and de Munck (2014, see also de Munck, 2009), in which both qualitative and quantitative data acquisition and analyses co-exist in a cross-feeding interaction. At the same time, both types of data are rooted in ethnographic knowledge as a fundamental and necessary molding background.

Scholars researching cultural models have been doing so for more than three decades (e.g., Holland and Quinn, 1987; D’Andrade and Strauss, 1992; Bennardo and de Munck, 2014). However, a separation between research projects privileging either a qualitative approach—mostly based on the acquisition and analysis of linguistic data (e.g., Quinn, 2005)—or a quantitative approach—mostly based on the acquisition of data by cognitive tasks and on the use of consensus analysis (e.g., Weller, 2007)—emerged very early. This division has delayed the development of the field and reduced its potential to be an effective presence in anthropology and cognitive science. CMT can possibly unify anthropology because it can be used to access knowledge about humans in evolutionary terms, in historical terms, in contemporary terms, and in linguistic practices terms. Thus, the whole discipline would benefit from embracing such a theory and in so doing find a necessary unity that could signify the renewed saliency of anthropology in the investigation of the human condition, both biological, historical, cultural, linguistic, and cognitive.

We have invited a number of scholars whose work has shaped and is shaping this ‘new’ anthropology. They are working under common assumptions and goals in human (cultural and linguistic) evolution/s, histories, contemporary cultures, and languages. Their coming together in this workshop will generate the appropriate momentum to assess what work has already been done, what work is being done, and what work needs to be done, thus, contributing to build an inspiring future for the discipline.

A well-defined agenda for anthropology should emerge from the workshop. If culture is knowledge situated in human minds, then, a clear position about the working of the mind is necessary (Bennardo, 2009)—a position that evolves as knowledge about the mind is continuously expanded and made available. Within the human mind, a place for culture is suggested. Culture in mind is conceived as made up of cultural models (de Munck and Bennardo, 2019). Such a theoretical position generates a methodology to pursue the goal of understanding aspects of human behavior as a result of specific cultural organizations of knowledge, i.e., cultural models. This clarity would allow anthropology to retake its prominent position among the (social and cognitive) sciences that study the human mind with the ultimate goal of understanding human behavior.

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***Organizers and List of Participants for WG Workshop***

*Organizers:*

1. **Giovanni Bennardo at Northern Illinois U., Dekalb, IL L-CA US**
2. **Victor C. de Munck at SUNY, New Paltz, NY (or Vilnius?) CA US**
3. **Susan C. Weller at U. of Texas, Med Branch, Galveston, TX CA US**

*Invited Participants:*

1. Rita Astuti at LSE, London, UK (**agreed**) CA Europe
2. Andrea Bender at U. of Bergen, Norway (**agreed**) CS Europe
3. Renatas Berniunas at Vilnius U., Lithuania (**agreed**) CA Europe
4. Stephen Chrisomalis at Wayne State U., Detroit. MI (**agreed**) L-CA US
5. John Gatewood at Lehigh U., Lehigh, PA (**agreed**) CA US
6. Miriam Haidle at Tūbingen U., Germany (**agreed**) A-CA Europe
7. Joseph Henrich at Harvard U., Cambridge, MA (**agreed**) P-CA US
8. Catherine Letcher-Lazo at U. of Bonn, Germany (**agreed**) CA Europe
9. Edward Lowe at Soka U., Aliso Viejo, CA (**agreed**) P-CA US
10. Steve C. Levinson at MPI, Njimegen, The Neth (**agreed**) L-CA Europe
11. Kateryna Maltseva at U. of Kyiv, Kiev, Ukraine (**agreed**) CA Europe
12. Steve J. Mithen at U. of Reading, UK (**agreed**) A-CA Europe
13. Dwight Read at U. of C., Los Angeles, CA (**agreed**) P-CA US
14. Claudia Strauss at Pitzer College, Claremont, CA (**agreed**) L-CA US
15. Svenia Vōlkel at J. Gutenberg U., Germany (**agreed**) L-CA Europe
16. Thomas Widlok at U. of Cologne, Germany (**agreed**) CA Europe

Key:

A = Cognitive Archaeology;

CA = Cognitive Anthropology;

CS = Cognitive Science;

LA = Linguistic Anthropology;

PA = Physical Anthropology.