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WELCOME

Welcome to the 4th International QRM Conference here in beautiful New Mexico. We are really happy to see you here, and are looking forward to a very interesting programme. Your presentations address not only some key issues in qualitative methodology, but also the challenges and struggles we face as qualitative researchers.

Over the years the QRM community has deepened and expanded. Our goal is to bring together scholars who are interested in qualitative methods, and in studying organizations in new and different ways. To provide a space where you can connect with people who have similar interests. Because sometimes being a qualitative and a critical scholar can be lonely. We keep the conference deliberately small to give participants the opportunity to meet, talk, create connections and collaborations. Because our commonality is that we are all interested in rich thick descriptions and alternative readings of organizations.

First was held in 2008 – idea to celebrate the 20th anniversary of John Van Maanen's book, *Tales of the Field*.

Since then, QRM has run every 2 years and we have had distinguished keynotes including:

John Van Maanen
Linda Putnam
Karen Ashcraft

Bud Goodall
Mark Johnson
George Marcus

We have also had four successful highly read journal conference special issues, from which 2 papers won paper of the year award, and 1 second.

So we are expanding the reach of new and different ways of studying organizations from a qualitative perspective. We have conference participants from Europe, Australasia, North America, South America, and South Africa – studying a variety of topics using a variety of methods.

We hope that QRM will continue to play a role in encouraging and supporting qualitative scholars across the world.

Two Thank Yous:

A HUGE one to our conference administrator for all 4 conferences - Aline Gonzalez, who you have already met at registration, and who does a fantastic job of making sure everything runs smoothly.

I'd also like to thank Sarah Tracy – who has been to every QRM – and who ran a qualitative methods workshop this afternoon.

A couple of housekeeping points:

1. The shuttle from the hotel to this venue runs at specific times. These are in the hotel lobby and the conference programme,
Tonight 9.30pm. (miss then have to get a taxi)
In the morning it runs at 8.15 and 8.30am
2. We have a yoga session each morning, for new and experienced yogis – in the Rio Grande room on the second floor of the hotel. 6.45 – 7.40am.
Karen

Any questions – Aline and myself.

Let me move on to the pleasurable task of introducing the first Keynote for QRM 2014.....

One of the benefits of organizing a conference is being able to invite keynote speakers who, I believe, engage in really interesting and thought-provoking work.

This year, we have another two amazing keynotes:

- Emily Martin, who will be here tomorrow.
- And Dennis Mumby, who is here tonight.

Dennis is Professor of Organizational Communication at the University of North Carolina. He's also Associate Editor at *Human Relations*, and the 2011 NCA Distinguished Scholar.

He's a critical communications scholar, which I think is succinctly defined in his most recent book, *Organizational Communication: A Critical Approach*. In this book, Dennis sets out his agenda for readers to become more critical about organizational processes and practices – *defining 'critical' as the 'enemy of common sense'* –

- in other words, to be critical means to expose what it is that we take for granted, and to draw attention to the complexity of the relationship between the ways in which we communicate, enact and experience organization and power. Organizations are therefore not rational structures, but interactively accomplished - and characterized by diverse meanings.

I first came across Dennis's work when doing my PhD. I found his 1988 book '*Communication and Power in Organizations*', which studies how structures of power << and ideologies << are produced and maintained through discursive and symbolic meanings (stories, narratives, actions, logos, memos . . .) and uses this as a basis for emancipation by encouraging the formation of alternative meanings. It gave me a very different way of thinking about power in organizations. I still have my handwritten notes!

Since then he has been deeply engaged in helping us recognize that organizations are political systems of control and resistance.

One of the main threads running through his work << and an important contribution to OS << is his critique of dualistic forms of thinking – for example, not seeing or studying power, control and resistance as separate – but that

instead we need to study the complex interrelationship of these processes in a more nuanced dialectical way.

For example, in his 1997 article – *The Problem of Hegemony* – he argues that the notion of hegemony embodies simultaneously the dynamics of power and resistance in, as he says ‘a tension-filled and contradictory manner’.

This notion of dialectics is also carried through his 2005 article - *Theorizing Resistance in Organization Studies* – in which he examines how control and resistance co-produce each other.

But Dennis is also interested in gender and feminist perspectives on organizations and organizing – having written with both Linda and Karen. And I have to **admirably** say that he has recently taken on Alvesson and Kärreman’s critique of organizational discourse studies, arguing that it is ‘rather anemic and wrongheaded.’ And limits generative possibilities!

And finally, I also mention his interest in humor – which I suspect might be relevant to his talk today, but << I hope <<< in one way rather another!

In one of his book chapters he uses his experience of attending a rather flatulent sociologist’s public lecture to examine how the interplay – the dialectic - between the sacred and profane and humor and seriousness help ‘counter the destructive features of workplaces’. In other words, humor is also a way of connecting people.

So I have great pleasure in introducing Dennis who is going talk about:

Changing the Subject of qualitative research: Communication, organizing and the politics of common sense.