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Holger Briel
Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC)

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Table of Contents

Editorial

As the COVID-19 crisis is apparently waning in many parts of the world, many felt that now is the time to attempt to return to that mythical status quo ante, only to find that that was hardly possibly anymore. The world had decided to move on and while some wealthier individuals were busily planning their revenge spending, other 'bothersome' events began or continued to take place – the horrible war Vladimir Putin forced upon Ukraine, droughts and floods associated with climate change, staggering inflation rates, and the great resignation, all leading to disruptions in supply chains and companies re-evaluating their business models. If for some years before COVID-19, the term "disruption" had increasingly been validated as something positive, signalling important and welcome (by some) changes to business models due to digital work practices forcibly challenging, changing and subverting traditional ways of doing business, one would be hard pressed to find anybody today to sing disruption's praises. If proof were needed, these crises convincingly displayed the human and systemic costs of disruption rather than the advantages a few were gaining from their disruptive behaviour.

And yet, change is inevitable and humans are right now forced to learn this lesson once again. In academia, hybrid teaching, online conferences and a general lingering uncertainty have brought about profound changes and left the future rigged with many more questions marks than before. These question marks stretch to cultural studies as well, as (certainty about) a world order unquestioned since WWII has been thoroughly eroded. Catch phrases such as "change through commerce" (or, in German, "Handel durch Wandel", as it rhymes so well) have been proven unworkable and when even Green Parties have become supporters of armed conflicts and extensions of licences for nuclear power plants, one understands how profound these changes are.

Fortunately, a concentration on cultural practices and theories is able to offer some hope and it is in the spirt of such hope that this issue has been collated. It starts out with a thorough and incisive theoretical discussion of the mutual benefits the bringing together of information theory and Stuart Hall's communication model affords. In his "Articulation: Individuals to Collectives", Victor Peterson II discusses the ancient philosophical problem of how individuals and society interact with each other. He enlists the help of information theory to demonstrate that Stuart Hall's work is able to redefine this relationship, and thereby enables individual agency to play a major part in societies' formation. He then focusses on systemic racism and shows that despite the power of the system, individual interventions can prove to be even more powerful and are able to sway (conscious and subconscious) group beliefs in different directions. This is neither an automatic nor a guaranteed process, but it raises the hope for possible change.

The next two articles, "Assessing Practice Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Role of Gender and Degree Programs in Competence Development" by Manuel E. Caingcoy et al. and "Tikbubulan: Transitions from Folk Song to Creative Dance" by Erwin Oscar P. Ripalda, take us to the Philippines and present practical work regarding changes in the teaching of culture. Caingoy et al. describe how teacher training is changing in the Philippines, taking onboard recent theories of cultural studies to refocus and localise classroom discussions on traditional cultures. Their small-scale study elicits a number of important suggestions, but also shows that some issues with gender in teaching would require a closer look, as it seems to suggest that male teachers are still challenged more than their female counterparts in effecting an empathetic classroom teaching atmosphere for the teaching of culture. Further (comparative) research, therefore, seems highly desirable in this area.

Riplada's "Tikbubulan" might be just such an intervention, as he describes in detail his efforts to conserve traditional Visayan songs by creating a specific dance for them and teaching children to become proud of their cultural heritage. The context for his intervention is the feared loss of much of local traditional folk culture due to the influence of western music, relegating local musical traditions to a very distant second place. It is heartening to see his fervour and desire for the creation of new multimodal cultural applications in order to inspire students not only to embrace their cultural traditions, but enact and combine them with modern-day elements, thereby writing them on.

Shahd Alshammari's "Life Writing by Kuwaiti Women: Voice and Agency" takes its readers to Kuwait and discusses two texts she describes, following Audre Lorde, as *biomythographies*. In her texts she laments the fact that in the gulf region, and by extension, in many Arabic countries, women's autobiographical writing is still stigmatized, and especially so when writing about differently abled women. If their bodies are generally hidden in public, continuing to follow the existing phallogocentric patriarchal system, this is even more the case for women writing about their own differing disabilities. She expertly applies Helene Cixous' work on female writing as a base for her own *Notes on the Flesh, (2017)* on living with MS and that of Fejer Almajed, *In/Coherence* (also 2017), detailing and linguistically and semantically exemplifying the latter's bouts with mental challenges. Her text is a call to arms for more women to come forward and share their experiences, but also for publishing houses to take up the challenge and publish such work.

Lastly, and perhaps inevitably so, a text contextualizing the Japanese reaction to COVID-19. "Spendemic: Japan's Marketing of Mythical Creatures and the Business of Selling Hope" by Antonija Cavcic recounts the tale of how many Japanese reverted to a *yōkai* (mythical being) called アマビエ (Amabié) which resembles a mermaid and traditionally prophesies about either an impending epidemic or an abundant harvest, to come to terms with the COVID-19 epidemic. Amabié offers no explanation, advice or immediate help, but many Japanese believe (a bit) that by recreating manifestations of her image, they can fend off such calamities. In a further step, Cavcic illustrates how this belief is then exploited by businesses to create revenues for themselves, thereby in effect engaging in epidemic profiteering.

On a professional note, IAFOR IJCS has recently been accredited by and listed on the SCOPUS database, a great honour for the journal. The evaluators noted its work towards cultural inclusion and its policy to highlight the diverse work from emerging as well as well-established scholars and its focus on texts from the global south. Those of us involved in putting together the issues will take this honour as further motivation to continue on this path and even intensify our efforts to make IJCS a truly global space for discussing the past, present and futures of cultural production and their important impact on individuals and society at large.

Wishing you much joy in reading this issue!

Holger Briel
Editor-in-Chief, *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*

Notes on Contributors

Article 1:
Articulation: Individuals to Collectives

Victor Peterson II received his PhD from King's College London and researches Articulation theory, global conceptions of blackness and the sound of social movements. His monograph, *Black Thought: A Theory of Articulation*, is currently under contract with Routledge. He has also published articles in *The Journal of Black Studies*, *The CLR James Journal*, and others. Previously, Victor was a RACE.ED fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh, and is currently a Cheryl A Wall and Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice Fellow at Rutgers University. He also teaches at The New School and New York University.
Email: petersonv@gmail.com

Article 2:
Assessing Practice Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Role of Gender and Degree Programs in Competence Development

Dr Manuel E. Caingcoy obtained his Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration and Master of Arts in Education majoring in Administration and Supervision at Central Mindanao University. He completed his Bachelor of Arts in Theology and a Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Values Education at San Isidro College. Currently, he is connected with the Bukidnon State University in Malaybalay City, Philippines. He is an Assistant Professor teaching on its graduate and undergraduate programs. He is also the former chairperson of its Secondary Education Department.
Email: manuelcaingcoy@buksu.edu.ph

Dr Vivian Irish M. Lorenzo is the current Alumni Relations Director at Bukidnon State University and is a faculty member of its Secondary Education Department. She obtained her Baccalaureate and Master's degrees from the same institution. She has previously been a member of the Research Ethics committee. Presently, she holds the rank of Assistant Professor. She finished her Doctorate in Philosophy in Education majoring in Applied Linguistics at the University of Immaculate Conception in Davao City, Philippines.

Dr Iris April L. Ramirez is presently the Institutional Sustainability Assessment and Philippine Quality Award Coordinator of Bukidnon State University. She is an Assistant Professor of the Secondary Education Department. She finished both her Bachelor's Master of Arts in Education degrees at the same institution. She then went on to obtain her Doctor of Education in Science Education at Cebu Normal University, Philippines. She teaches both science and professional education subjects. She is a researcher, an extensionist and an instructional material developer.

Catherine D. Libertad is currently an Associate Professor at Bukidnon State University, Malayblay, Bukidnon, Philippines. She obtained her Master's Degree in Educational Administration at the same institution. Her research work focuses on education, specifically on relevance, responsiveness, and equity in higher education, educational administration, and management and supervision.

Dr Romeo G. Pabiona Jr. obtained his PhD in Educational Administration at Bukidnon State University, Malaybalay City, Philippines. In 2006 he received a Master of Arts in Educational Administration at the same University as a scholar in its Department of Education. He furthermore holds a Bachelor degree in Secondary Education in Social Studies from Rizal Memorial Colleges, Davao City. He was also a regional trainer in Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) during the mass training of teachers for the K to 12 programs. Presently, he is an Associate Professor in the College of Education and teaches general education and major subjects in Social Studies.

Ruffie Marie C. Mier is a college instructor at Bukidnon State University in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education in English and a Master's degree in Education in English Language Teaching at the same Institution. She has been teaching there for more than six years and has also been involved in research related to curriculum and faculty development. She is currently studying for her PhD in English Language Education at Philippine Normal University.

Article 3:
Tikbubulan: Transitions from Folk Song to Creative Dance

Erwin Oscar P. Ripalda is a professor at Eastern Visayas State University, Tacloban City, Philippines, teaching college Physical Education and also in its the Graduate School. He received his BS in Elementary Education, majoring in Music, Art, Physical Education (MAPE) at Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City. It was during these years that he became interested in dance and he joined the school's dance troupe. Research and performing Dance in education and culture has become his passion and in particular he likes contributing to the preservation of Philippine dances, something he concentrates on in his teaching as well. He is also a choreographer and has earned the Sangyaw Award for his contributions to Dance. Presently, he is continuing his research into and the conservation of unpublished traditional local songs and the creation of local dances.
Email: erwin.ripalda@evsu.edu.ph

Article 4:
Life Writing by Kuwaiti Women: Voice and Agency

Dr Shahd Alshammari is Assistant Professor of Literature at Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait. Her research interests include Disability studies, medical humanities, and Arab women's writing. Her most recent book publication is *Head Above Water* (Neem Tree Press, 2022). She is also interested in Narrative Therapy and Bibliotherapy and runs her own website. www.shahdalshammari.com
 Email: Alshammari.s@gust.edu.kw

Article 5:
Spendemic: Japan's Marketing of Mythical Creatures and the Business of Selling Hope

Dr Antonija Cavcic is currently a Senior Lecturer at The University of Shiga Prefecture, Japan. She graduated from Heidelberg University with a Master of Arts in English Studies and earned her PhD in the Arts from Murdoch University. Her most recent publication, "Shining under the glass ceiling: How Japan's Liberal Democratic Women's Affairs Division keeps women in their place" (2022), was featured in the *Gender Awareness in Language Education Journal*, and she is currently working on a paper about the unique use of panel transitions in comics published during the pandemic. Her current research interests include the uses of gaming and gratifications and gender representation in manga and print media and Japanese popular culture and language education in Japan.
Email: cavcic.a@shc.usp.ac.jp

Articulation: Individuals to Collectives

Victor Peterson II
Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, UK

Abstract

This work illustrates the inner workings of a model set forth by Stuart Hall that analyzes how social formations emerge, interact, evolve, and dissolve over time. It treats social-cultural and political movements as complex adaptive systems and utilizes information theory to treat these conceptual entities as physical systems. In so doing, Articulation theory shows how relations of subordination and dominance emerge and provides a solution to how individual acts may harbor non-local effects on and within social formations.

Keywords: articulation theory, information theory, mereology, sorites, Stuart Hall

One of the main issues that arises in Articulation theory is how individual acts lead to group formation, affiliation, and polarization. How do group expressions indirectly describe individual acts and individual acts evolve into group activity? What if we treat collectives and their emergence and evolution as complex adaptive systems? Articulation theory studies how relations of subordination and dominance emerge, not necessarily the things that occupy those positions but the emergent relationship between the positions themselves. This gives way to a mereological problem, that is, how does one get from the individual to the group, from individual groups to collections of groups, and back? This paper will not go too deeply into any sorites sorts of problems, discerning the point at which a collection of individuals becomes a group. Issues such as those fall aside when considered in an articulatory sense, for an ensemble is constituted by an internal relation held between its members. Framed in this way, we will find that we can formalize relations as objects of study and analyze their evolution.

We will first explore the sorties argument against Articulation theory. Then we will be able to return to the mereological issue at hand. We will utilize Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding social communication model to show why sorties arguments dissipate when talking about how we move from individuals to groups to relations between groups. To do that we will explore the connection between Hall's theory coming to fruition at the same time as a reinvigorated interest in the resources of information theory. As these connections help us formulate the contention that information produces and sustains our knowledge regarding what is and what is not a constitutive member of our state of affairs, we will be able to provide a model of what emerges as an individually complex yet collectively simple system.

Sorites issues are interest-relative (Fara 2000). Our determinations are made relative to our interests, that is, they refer to a norm (=canonical type). This term might seem vague at the moment, but when treated info-theoretically, it will become more concrete. For now, we propose that the position of an individual relative to others can be mapped between axes of type-selection and use/application (=compositional) – semantic and rhetorical axes (Gates 1988) – that determine the canonical space containing that individual's modes of expression. An individual's position within that space is a function of their mode of expression between those axes. It will become evident that the content of that expressed position is functional, thereby giving us a way to model how formations within that space emerge, diverge, polarize, and/or dissolve.

A mode of expression is non-representational in itself as it produces representations. Modes of expression will be treated as an encoding/decoding mechanism. As, for example, not what comes out of one's mouth but what constructs the thoughts organizing and upon which phonemes are mapped. Formulated this way, encoding/decoding does not run aground on dualist notions for the system, and the mechanism, proceeds by concrete sensate cognition; cognition being the ability to convert analog experience into digital representations and project those representations to organize subsequent experience, updating those representations over time.

A brief statement on sorites issues, that is to say, at what point do we consider a formation of individuals a group, will be made so that it's clear that once two or more individuals are related in some way, they form a group and relations between groups give way to indirect effects within a system or constellation of groups. Issues of the sorites type revolve around the classical logical notion of transitivity. (Fara 2000)

for all x,y, if x is F, and there is a relation R between x,y, then y is F

There are many questions that arise from this that are only compounded when *x* and *y* are independent. If what counts as an instance of *F* is a case of what does or does not have that property, and the above makes that determination plausible, then how does one know the extension of *F*? Where *F* does or does not apply? Is *x* a subset of *y* or are *x* and *y* the same or, if independent, at what point can we transition from *x* to *y* when considering what *F* is? At what point does the addition of one individual mean the extension of a group and at what point can we say that some individual was a predecessor in the process of articulating what we now consider that group? There is a way to formalize how we can have properties that reference vague quantities when the conditions of their application can be determined.

Conditions of use seem to be "attributable" to some implied canonical type, or "implicit comparison class." (Fara 2000, 53) If it's the case that if we encounter a property expressed by the function of the use of a predicate entailing the function of its application, then we can assume that the appearance of that predicate implies a determinant to its function of application. (Church 1956) That function can be abstracted. If some thing *a* is labeled by a predicate denoting a property *F,* then its function of application, what's stored for later use, is *Fx,* not *Fa.* For if it's the case that if *a* then an instance of *F* and, therefore, one has the concept *F,* then we can label, recognize, *a* and later instances of *a* as *F.* The ability to use *F* represents a clear-case of this function, relating conditions of application to contexts of expression in which each use obtains a functional-equivalence with the initial determination of those conditions. (see Fara on constraints, p. 57) We can treat the relation *R* functionally for, by definition, a function is expressed when

> there is a feature *x* of a domain and a feature *y* of a sub/co-domain such that (*x,y*) is a member of the function *f*

That function indexes (=determines) a relation between a domain (=conditions) and subdomain (=context of application) whereby the relation *R* can be said to be the functional content of *F.* As such, the function itself is an abstract object and, therefore, can be the content of another predicate. As the object of the other predicate, the former acts as a name for the object present in the context described by that secondary predicate and in which one determines what is an *F.* If a function can be determined prior to application, we can test where and what is an *F* without having to know the full range of its application. The conditions of applying *F* are determined when domain and subdomain are the same, when *f* of *x* is *x.* This indexes the canonical type *F,* determining what counts as *F* prior to its next instance. When *f* of *x* is *x, F* is of no one thing as yet, save the conditions it names as those in which *F* is available for use. Now we can relate an individual to a property expressed by the function of that individual given certain conditions, what Fara indicates as the "interest-relative" explanation of our use of vague predicates. A context in which *F* applies, then, is one where there is a functional equivalence between *x* and some *x*-successor. As *x* and that successor are not interchangeable but functionally related, we can call that successor *y,* giving way to a definition for functional equivalence implied by that of a function. So,

> if there's an *x* of a domain and *y* of a sub/co-domain whose pair is a member of *f,* and if there is a pair between *x* and some *y*-successor of another sub/co-domain, then that *y* and *y*-successor are *functionally equivalent,* making that *y*-successor an extension of *f,* i.e. an *f*-successor or instance of *F*

This is key. We see how the same function produces different output and how the same output can be the result of different functions. As functions index their conditions of appropriate

application, the conditions indexed by *F* being a property of the objects it relates, then different objects can operate under the same property because the functional content of their expressions form a line of citation referencing the conditions determining they're being understood as *F*. So, if *F* is *f*, then $F_1=F$-successor, $F_2=F_1$-successor, and so on. No matter where we land in that line, referring to conditions of application – not to some thing but how that thing operates given those conditions – means that reference is secured as long as a functional equivalence obtains between the things to which that property is/was attributed. Sorites paradoxes dissolve as long as $\boxed{(F \text{ and } x) \leq y}$ then $\boxed{x \leq (if\ F\ then\ y)}$, which is to say that if $\boxed{Fx \text{ and } Rxy \leq Fy}$ then $\boxed{Rxy \leq (if\ Fx\ then\ Fy)}$. This in effect models a network of positions whose branches connect those nodes in a particular way and the location and extent of an expressed property within that network can be seen by way of those branches. An instance of *y* is an extension of the range of *F* as the relationship between *x,y*, given their functional equivalence, is implicit in that domain. So, when the pair is made, that pair becomes an object of the domain constructed from it. Therefore, when *F* is applied we test that relationship and update its range of application relative to that canonical type.

We return to the mereological interests of this paper. The foundations of Articulation theory set out by Stuart Hall (1980) utilized that term in regard to how ensembles come together rather than what counts as an ensemble. Articulation is a theory of evolving relations (=conditions) and the identities that emerge in those networks, not outside of them. The latter would lead to the reference vagaries implicit in the sorites paradox (Hall 1996). The encoding/decoding model of social communication that Hall (1973) develops mirrors the mathematical theory of information. As information theory allows us to treat information and, therefore, knowledge, as physical systems, Articulation theory provides a finite yet open model that can explain the formation and dissolution of phenomena which may appear under different predicates, names, or descriptions and yet operate similarly across contexts. We will see how individuals of different and changing dispositions can contribute to and sustain a collective formation across contexts while, within those formations, interacting with each other. Consequently, an individual (decision perhaps?) can have a non-local a/effect on others within the system both individually and group-wise.

How do we bridge the divide between individual and group without running into paradoxes or dualism? The encoding/decoding model states that one abstracts a relation between various features of their environment and encodes that relation – indexes it under some concept referencing the property of satisfying that relation of features – and projects that concept into subsequent contexts. When shared with others, or when the output of that action is returned to sender, that output is decoded in terms relevant to the receiver. For example, the concept of a face is not interchangeable with a single instance but encodes a relation between nose, eyes, ears, and so forth that expresses the concept of a face. This example is particularly useful since most all people have faces and yet each face looks different. As such, we can formalize how someone can "know" someone's face. The concept of that face is an emergent property expressed by the relationship between its subject's components. The encoding/decoding process automatically implies a limit to this procedure – a loss of information that will be explored below – that determines which objects satisfy that concept; what is significant, therefore meaningful, within the framework indexed by, and with respect to, that concept. In this way, that concept references a model that when a subject is asked a question regarding the world in which that phenomenon exists, they refer to that model to explain that concept. (Minsky 1968) Models, that is to say, "world-views," index a position between use and canonical (=type-selection) axes. As one's orientation in that space is a function of their relation to others, we can assume a yes/no disposition to others for explanatory purposes,

whereby either an individual is related to another or not. This shouldn't worry us too much for to be oriented away from a particular direction is to be oriented toward another. Thus, the set of dispositions index a particular orientation in space.

An encoding/decoding model helps us formalize group evolution as we can talk about individual connections by virtue of the extent to which encodings can be shared and that network evolves into group formations with respect to those individuals' disposition toward others without having to forgo the individual for the sake of the group. We can see why the latter would be alarming as race and racial prejudice can be studied as a function of group position. (Blumer 1958) Racialization becomes the process of making an individual metonymic with a group while predetermining that group position's value. From the above, we see how different individuals may have different dispositions toward the same object – apparently different while the relationship between them remains the same – and yet the relationship individuals obtain between themselves index a particular shape in which the extent to which that collective holds across contexts. The mutual information this group orientation shares across different instances allow us to say that, yes, internal dispositions differ yet a similar arrangement is obtained. Therefore, this formation is the same group. Indirectly, we see that different groups can also have similar orientations. From this, we can model dispositions under the concept of polarization, the extent to which an individual is turned on or turned off within the given circumstances.

Consider a collection of individuals where each must decide between two actions. An individual's disposition towards those options depends on the information it's received about that action. So, for a group of individuals, a subgroup chooses one option, gaining them access to a particular domain A whose benefit is a function of what they know given what they don't prior to gaining access to that domain; and another group chooses a safer option B for the unknown is less costly with respect to what's known to be the case. Polarization in the group is a measure of the rate at which the group is stretched toward different options, allowing us to determine the extent to which that formation coheres across contexts. This is to say,

> the combination of individuals choosing A is a function of those not choosing A combined with the expected benefit of connecting with the unknown relative to what's known to be the case.

Those not choosing A index their baseline expectation, B. This sets up a measure of group cohesion with respect to individual disposition. Despite there being a safer choice, if one is turned on to a possibility by others because an expected sufficient number of individuals seem to be going that route, then it is worthwhile to do so for personal as well as group benefit. However, there are situations in which coordination may work against individuals. For if we are talking about a whole collection, then each indexed position had a prior possibility of ½, that is, could have or could have not been accessible, prior to choice. Given their prior disposition, they would weight their options in different ways. An individual occupies both positions with respect to the current circumstance prior to that choice. A more appropriate mapping, then, is from the following:

> Change in disposition is evaluated as the sum of pairs of individuals whose dispositions coupled with that of another insofar as the overall group is combined with the difference of the sum combination of individuals choosing A and those choosing B.

Individuals affect group orientation based on the disposition of others such that one's disposition corresponds to their neighbors in the network of which they are a part. Shifts in group formations, their convergence, coherence, and divergence – their emergence being probable, yet their connection being a yes/no determination – are mapped with regards to polarization within the group and with respect to others. Ising models provide a beautiful visualization of the above if we consider temperature as the mood of an environment– understood as the frequency of interactions between individuals, providing the information that sustains our understanding of one's orientation in space and time–affecting the polarization between individuals that causes the formation of groups and their relative positions. Access to what others are doing reveals how relations of subordination or dominance with respect to which modes of expression are licensed or not falls directly within our encoding/decoding model.

We are now almost able to treat the interest-relative account underpinning our study, but first, we must explain the connection between encoding/decoding and information theory. Information can be treated in physical terms as it's the measure of the reduction of possibilities with each decision made over a particular collection. A flip of a coin carries 1 bit of information as there are two equally probable options (=50-50) prior to the flip. To decide via a flip of that coin reduces the options to 1. This resembles the measure of entropy in physical systems. So if one encodes a concept as a relationship between features, that is to say, not 1:1 with each feature, and projects that relation or framework to see what objects in other contexts it captures, highlighting the features that are related in a similar way and selecting the object in which that relationship's satisfied, then that encoding is transmitted across a particular channel whereby the information that is received is a function of the reduction of all possible alternatives traveling through that channel to the object embodying the concept projected.

As such, decoding occurs when one receives output from what's been transmitted and then converts that information into functionally equivalent terms, terms relevant to the receiver. The hope from the source is that the information decoded is functionally equivalent to what's been transmitted. Thus, decoding is a re-encoding of what's received out of all that is travelling through that channel. The other possibilities, in addition to what was encoded, constitute an analog representation of information, a transmission that's continuous and registering only if over a certain threshold of some receptor designed to accept it that is socially and experientially calibrated over time. Hall would study the encoded concepts in news media which were transmitted innocuously because a norm in the channel for the source harbored injurious a/effects, when decoded by the receiver. The embodiment of those concepts or their disregard serves to fortify the channel itself and organize the populations to which that information was transmitted in accord with the structuring dynamics of the channel, maintaining a racialized state of affairs.

Information, however, can only be converted into knowledge relative to the resources of the subject, the encodings that that subject has both accumulated and adapted over time, and by which, when triggered, that subject organizes subsequent experience. That subject organizes experience by projecting some encoding into future contexts as a guide to action. The conditions highlighted allow or disallow certain actions. This conversion entails a loss of information despite a gain in the ability to manipulate their environment utilizing this capacity. An analog signal may carry +3 bits of information for 10 alternatives, however, if those alternatives are broken into two categories, each category only carries +2 bits of information, yet the decision to organize that information in that way directly attributes knowledge that is sustained by that information relative to the resources of that subject's capacities. A bit of

information held relative to a model that, utilizing a particular capacity, gives us the means to say in what respect that information is meaningful. The limit of interpretation tells us which model's concepts are of use to explain that phenomenon relative to others. Therefore, the capacity of that individual pulls from resources that are represented as a network of open predicates labeling those categories. These networks are at times called "schema."

Above, we saw how a canonical type can be abstracted from experience. If a category labeled *F* is first attributed to an object *a,* encoding *Fa,* then according to the above, if we have *F* then we can recognize an instance of an *a*-successor given *F*. So, for subsequent encounters *x,* if we encounter an *x* such that we attribute *F* to *x* and mark it as an instance *Fb,* then we can understand, through prior abstraction, that that *x,* where *fx=x* indexes *F,* is less than or equal to the domain characterized by that extension of *F*. Thus, if *Fa* then *Fb. Fx* is an open concept, abstracted from experience, that is updated over rounds of application. If the application of a concept to a thing was 1:1, that capacity's resources (=storage) would be extremely limited. However, if we abstract (=encode) the functional content of an object of experience, how and to what and where it applies, and project it to test its extension, we obtain a model whose applications updates over time. Our encoding capacity, whereby understanding is a function of application producing knowledge, grows exponentially. Models, then, become members of our world for they are the way we gain access to it. In order to produce an object to deny their membership in the world, one would have to resort to resources only afforded by the mechanism that allows them to make that distinction in the first place.

This brings us to interest-relativity. Information is characterized by the elimination of possible alternatives. Each decision contributes toward the average information provided by the entire ensemble of alternatives characterizing a context. Information provides the scaffolding with which we can attribute meaning to phenomena. It seems that knowledge, the ability to determine where concepts do or don't apply, requires uncertainty, information loss. A channel is that within the analog experience of stimuli of various amplitudes that do not contribute information; of that which we are certain.[1] These assumptions hedge or contextualize what is varying and therefore provide the channel through which we perceive the growth and dissipation of alternatives. For example, having an eye does not contribute to seeing as there are no alternatives with respect to seeing provided by not having an eye. To have an eye is to be able to see the variation between alternatives travelling through the medium it is calibrated to perceive, the information that is converted by an encoding/decoding capacity into knowledge relative to the resources embodied and accumulated (=composed) by that subject over time, making what's perceived significant within that system (=sight).

Different models determining the applicability of concepts pick out different relations and, therefore, operate over or constitute different channels. Like a cipher made of a sheet with slots in a particular arrangement placed over a body of text, when placed properly, that cipher (=model) only allows certain phrases to emerge. Functional equivalences across models held by individuals indicate group formations. As encoding involves what is known as equivocation, the information sent (=source information) with respect to that received, and based on the fact

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[1] Information theory is based on the combination of the probability of an event's occurrence and how many binary decisions of that probable event it takes to eliminate alternatives so as to identify that event out of that ensemble. If *p* is that probability, and logarithm base 2 the number of yes/no elimination of alternatives based upon the probability of an event, then information is calculated for each event as: *p*log(*p*). This reveals a great deal for if for some probable event we have probability 1=certainty or 0=certainly-not-1, the $\log_2$ of either destroys information, for the former or does not contribute information for the latter. Uncertainty is required to produce information.

that decoding involves noise, indirectly proves the presence of a channel that provides the limit to what's considered meaningful or not. The measure of the extent to which a channel is maintained gives us, by virtue of the functional equivalences that arise, a model for how individual action leads to the direct or indirect emergence of group phenomena. The extent to which functional equivalences hold across contexts, if we consider their emergence a function of their mode of expression, gives us a way to model how individuals are related and how those relationships dissipate over time.

The measure for this shared, mutual, quantity directly relates individual to group expression and groups to groups in the following way. [1] If we have the probability of a particular expression obtaining a model indexing one's position within the state of affairs coupled with the rate of the reduced alternatives to that expression attributed whenever an instance of it arises (=predictability), then we have a measure of the amount of information that expression contributes to a group, that is, the meaning of that canonical type. [2] If we have a function indexing the conditions in which that expression is licensed, thereby labelling those conditions, the probability of that label, which for all intents and purposes is indexed to a model of those conditions, and that function obtaining in a subsequent context, measures our ability to predict what that model captures. Given the current ensemble of alternatives, what's captured obtains a functional equivalence with that initial index.[2] [3] It follows that mutual information between individuals, whether individuals or individual groups, constitutes a group even if connections are non-local. That information is carried by

> the difference between the information that an individual X contributes to the canon and the information contributed by X given that of Y.

This is equivalent to the difference in the information that Y and the information that Y given X contributes, giving us the mutual information held between X and Y. That mutually held information indexes an emergent association between the two, the group. If this mutual relationship holds across contexts, we obtain a measure of the robustness of the affinities between the individuals constituting the group; if the relationship between individuals is non-local, because of a different set of dispositions within that state of affairs, the constellation of those relationships can be shown to be approximately maintained from context to context due to the functional equivalence of their modes of expression.

Group emergence by way of individual expressions occurs through functional composition that follows from our definition of functions above. The output of one function becoming the input for another function makes the output of the latter a representation, or image, of a relationship between the first and last domains. That image is represented in the first domain of its extension to the latter. Using mutual information and cross-informational measures by way of the functional equivalence of the concepts held between these individuals, the group constitutes a composite model of its components although that composite cannot be made interchangeable with an individual component. Thus, if a functional equivalence obtains between the output received from the projection of an encoding, those respective decodings being functionally equivalent reveals a relationship within and to a group that may or may not be known to the individual and yet that individual's output contributes towards the information of what that group is. This removes our initial worries. Individual but not mutually exclusive aspects can be constitutive of social-cultural and political formations. Utilizing information theory to

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[2] This is calculated as cross information. $p(s)\log q(s)$, where p is the probability of a labeled event occurring and q the prediction of a functional-equivalence between instances of that event.

formalize Hall's encoding/decoding model allows us to discuss interest-relative concepts by way of the polarization – the dispositional relation that obtains between individuals – constituting the overall orientation of a group, providing information on group relations, both internal and external, as one system with various sub/co-components. Groups can be related or not but remain components of a global model of a state of affairs.

One example of this process comes directly from the study of race and racialization. Historically, if blackness is necessarily a global phenomenon – considering the circum-oceanic networks of slavery and colonial extraction – how is it that we have different concepts of Black identity, operating under different names, yet each instantiation of blackness can be held functionally-equivalently, but not interchangeably, while remaining, as James Baldwin once said, very "Black"? The source's projected identity is decoded in terms relevant to the conditions and resources available at the receiving domain. We find that the racialization of that label occurs as a function of how it is applied with the particular expectation of capturing certain populations (=cross-information). Yet, as it is applied, that label is updated given the alternatives it encounters. As such, these identities obtain a functional-equivalence over time, whereby various labels operate in the same way despite different contexts and the presupposed meanings associated with each label. Although different contexts, the relationship between its features, the conditions, hold. The content of that canonical type is expressed as a function of its use, indexed to the conditions licensing its use. This means that no one label of that ever-growing collection of identities functioning to express an aspect of Black-ness can circumscribe the whole although each references the same initial conditions. The mutual information held across contexts means that blackness can be known under different names yet be related and maintain a "Black" form of life despite acting on each other non-locally. It is in this way that we can formalize a notion of diaspora, a concept in which a group can be known in excess of any one locale or label and yet retain a mode of expression across contexts whose outputs, though different, obtain a functional equivalence expressing a complex composite concept with each other.

Another example comes from movement building itself. From our analysis, we can track patterns of resistance to legibility within a channel and/or the cooption by that channel of modes of expression. Cooption occurs when/where expressions are rendered as not contributing information, thus being made a component of the channel, that is, a socio-political and economic structure, filtering what contributes to the state. We find that polarization through these channels, the direction of the flow of information between individuals, and groups, is a good measure of how relations of subordination and dominance are being negotiated, even if causation cannot be directly determined. Consider a global conception of blackness forged during the Bandung Conferences in the mid-20th century. This movement, aligned to neither Soviet communism nor capitalism, was comprised of 29 countries not necessarily connected by land but by orientation so as to negotiate what represented a Third World of possibility. The collection of individual states was able to effect non-local change through their relationship to each other, not their proximity. This can also currently be seen in the proclaimed networked or "decentralized" structure of the Black Lives Matter movement.

It's the ability to move from node to node in that matrix that expresses the extent to which we consider which nodes in a global array are members of the same ensemble. Considering connections between nodes in a tree-like structure, where each node is connected through some branch, a measure of transfer (=communication) between nodes, then, can be treated info-theoretically following the logic from our introduction. For a global distribution of nodes N, $\boxed{(x \text{ and } n_1) \leq n_2 \equiv x \leq \text{if } n_1 \text{ then } n_2}$. The transfer of information is found where

> if *t*=information transferred (=movement) and *X*(*t*) and *Y*(*t*) are two nodes whose disposition towards others changes over time, then *T* from *X to Y* is the difference between *I*(*Y*(*t*) given the change in past disposition of *X*) and *I*(*Y*(*t*) given the change in disposition of *X* and *Y*)

From this it's apparent that if $x \geq N$ our analysis would fall prey to the logical fallacy of affirming our consequence, that is, searching for what affirms the channel rather than modelling what flows from node to node. A movement from node to node composes a relation between nodes. Movements, and the information they carry, are distributed. The above merely states that a movement is expressed as a function of its past trajectories. This also means that it can be expressed in unexpected ways as the abstraction of the concept through which we monitor it is based on the past. Given prior input, the output is made relevant to current conditions, yet remains functionally-equivalent to past iterations. (Pilkiewicz K. R., Lemasson B. H., Rowland A., et al., 2020) The same movement can appear differently dependent upon where it has travelled and the resources there. Connecting to our previous example, the notion of diaspora is not indexed to some geography prior to its expression given some chosen past trajectory but is about traversing geographies.

In sum, functional equivalences provide a measure of group cohesion. Polarization gives us the rate of dissipation as well as the turn towards alternative formations. Our model allows us not to have to worry as much about cataloging each and every aspect of a context by encoding and summing subsets of those framed conditions to see how much information enters our model as a result of that encoding's implementation. That process may prove inexhaustible, we may never find continuities. Subjectivity operates associatively, poetically (Moten 2003), therefore, relationally. (Glissant 1997) As functions can be considered abstract objects, we can treat relations as objects of analysis without having to reduce them to singular instances. An ensemble from a collection is not a thing in that collection but composed of its parts, thus representing a necessarily possible extension of that collection that was latent until actualized, articulated, presently. These ensembles can then be associated to compose more complex ensembles that reference their means of construction; otherwise, their formation would not have been possible. The effect is a deepening of the collection as we extend the range of expressions that emerge from it. All one needs to know is whether the information generated has increased or decreased, whether there is equivocation over contexts, from domain of selection through a function of projection to one of composition with, translation to, others, that is, poetic computation. If given the information received, does more or less information allow some alternative to arise? For example, to live on such street in this city in such and such country vs. to live in this city in this country. The latter carries more potential information because it is less specific yet captures the concept, but the former is an extension of the same domain.

So if encoding/decoding capacity is about the projection of models framing states of affairs and what it articulates is the amount of information able to be re-encoded by the receiver, setting limits on what we know about a state from their position, these limits are what Hall's theory claims marks what is significant or not with respect to our reading of that state, relative to a channel, model, or structure. A channel is chosen in order to organize experience; however, it quickly becomes apparent that selections determining what can or cannot contribute indicate the mechanism organizing the state itself, proving a hallmark of Articulation theory. Articulation is the study of how relations of subordination and dominance emerge by virtue of which modes of expression are licensed or not. When no information is received, this does not mean that it was not transmitted, only that a structure is in place that may be blocking it. We

cannot know that nothing was sent for information produces knowledge that encodes only a subset of the total amount of information possible. So even though we can't determine what is known, only what can be, our model is fine because we can still show how information might be transmitted without predetermining its content, which is what we wanted to avoid in the first place. In articulatory terms, we wanted to avoid overdetermination. Overdetermination is exemplified by a choice in channel that, regardless of what's transmitted from some source, that channel determines that nothing is received or that whatever information is produced is of no value to the source, only to the one that selected the channel. This provides a model for appropriation. As content is functional, that is, it maps a relation between domains of encoding and projection to those in which decoding and composition occurs, we obtain a model of movements that bridges the individual to group gap and a way to ascertain individual operations in relation to the noise generated by the channel. The meanings of vague boundaries of groups render, by their movement (=transmission), the truth conditions of the expressions composing them. These movements are sensitive to the channel through which they flow, that is, our interests. As the degree to which a group across contexts might change, with group affiliation and divergence being significant to the speaker, the interests of the speaker evolves, changes, and adapts. There is then a necessary possibility of the extension for what that group means within the constellation of groups composing our state of affairs.

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Corresponding author: Victor Peterson II
Email: petersonv@gmail.com

Assessing Practice Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Role of Gender and Degree Programs in Competence Development

Manuel E. Caingcoy
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Vivian Irish M. Lorenzo
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines
Alumni Relations Office, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Iris April L. Ramirez
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines
Quality Assurance Office, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Catherine D. Libertad
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Romeo G. Pabiona Jr.
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Ruffie Marie C. Mier
College of Education, Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Abstract

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) weaves together rigor and relevance while it improves student achievement and engagement. The Philippine Department of Education implemented Indigenous People's education to respond to the demands for culturally responsive teaching. Teacher education graduates are expected to articulate the rootedness of education in sociocultural contexts in creating a learning environment that recognizes respect, connectedness, choice, personal relevance, challenges, engagement, authenticity, and effectiveness. Practice teachers need relevant exposure and immersion to fully develop their competence in CRT. This scenario necessitates attention to assessing the competence of 191 practice teachers in CRT, correlating their competence across dimensions, and verifying the role of gender and degree programs in competence development. This investigation provides evidence on the role of gender in competence development toward culturally responsive teaching. Such competence is vital in practice teachers, especially because they are exposed to learners with diverse backgrounds during their teaching internship. This evidence informs supervising instructors in molding practice teachers.

Keywords: competence, culturally responsive teaching, gender, degree program

CRT is about "weaving together rigor and relevance" (Muñiz, 2019, p. 7) and is recognized as a powerful method for improving student achievement and engagement (Byrd, 2016; Norman, 2020). Academics also labeled it "culturally responsive pedagogy" (Brown et al., 2019; Samuels, 2018; Norman, 2020; Martell, 2018), "culturally responsive instruction" (Keehne et al., 2018), and "culturally responsive praxis" (Aronson, 2016), while a few scholars dubbed it "culturally responsive education" (Brown et al., 2019; Alaca, 2017). A few tried to characterize it in professionals by calling them "culturally responsive teachers" (May, 2011; Olson & Rao, 2016). Despite these variations, the term CRT remains dominant in the literature (Leonard et al., 2018; Byrd, 2016; Self, 2016; Siwatu, 2011; Mackay & Strickland, 2018; Crow, 2021), and continues to gain popularity (Muñiz, 2019).

Gay's (2010) characteristics of CRT were among the most adopted ideas by which teachers acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups as legacies that affect students' disposition; build meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities; use a variety of instructional activities that are connected to different learning styles; teach students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritage; and incorporate multicultural information, resources, and materials in subjects and skills taught in school.
(Gay 2010, p. 29)

There exist many studies on CRTs that involve in-service teachers, yet, there is a dearth of research in terms of identifying the role of gender and degree programs in competence development among practice teachers. Lambeth et al. (2016) argued that "there is more work to be done in preparing teachers to work with students whose race, culture, and socioeconomic background may be different than the preservice teachers and mentors responsible for teaching students in schools" (Lambeth et al. 2016, p. 46.). There is also much need to investigate CRT in a Philippine context. Studies so far were only focused on culturally responsive curricula (Mercado, 2021), school leadership (Brooks & Brooks, 2018), and cultural identities (Inocian et al., 2020). In parallel, the Department of Education identified four regions that are implementing culturally responsive Indigenous People's education: Northern Mindanao, Soccsksargen, Region XI, and the Cordillera Administrative Region (Department of Education, 2016). Despite the effort, CRT has not been given enough attention in the country.

Bukidnon State University, as a higher education institution, gives high regard to cultural sensitivity in its core values. Its graduates are expected to demonstrate a capability to collaborate or implement initiatives to sustain cultural heritage. These graduates need to demonstrate CRT in planning and delivering a lesson, developing or selecting instructional materials, assessing and facilitating the learning of students. Additionally, the government expects them to articulate the rootedness of education in sociocultural contexts (Commission on Higher Education, 2017). With this aspiration, teacher education graduates need to develop CRT in the practice of the teaching profession. In so doing, they can create a learning environment that recognizes respect and connectedness, choice and personal relevance, challenges, and engagement, and most especially the authenticity and effectiveness of the learning experience (Rhodes, 2016; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2004).

This paper assesses the competence of practice teachers in CRT in a state university in the Philippines. Additionally, it tests the relationship among the subscales or dimensions of CRT, namely, establishing inclusion, developing attitudes, enhancing meanings, and engendering competence. Likewise, it verifies whether gender and degree programs play a role in developing such competence. The results of the study may be used in decision-making and in

conceptualizing an intervention before practice teachers can complete their academic programs.

Literature Review

This research reviewed the literature to shed light on understanding the topics of culturally responsive teacher education and teaching. Richardson (2018) asks this question: Are we adequately preparing practice teachers to circumvent cultural marginality in the classroom? This triggers a continuous conversation on CRT. Muñiz (2019) posited that what we need is now to invest in developing culturally responsive educators by crafting comprehensive professional teaching standards that integrate expectations for CRT. These standards should give a clear and consistent message regarding the knowledge, skills, and mindset to be culturally responsive. A case study examined the learning experiences of practice teachers in modeling CRT in the university context and multicultural education course. It was revealed that the critical and justice-oriented course that modeled CRT activities and behavior helped practice teachers transform and extend their conceptual knowledge of CRT. It allowed them to critically reflect and reconstruct prior knowledge and connect these experiences to future teaching practice (Acquah & Szelei, 2018).

Griffin (2011) identified the dispositions to be integrated in preparing practice teachers to be culturally responsive. These include sociocultural awareness, affirming attitudes towards all students, the commitment to act as an agent of change, learning about all students, and the use of CRT practices in teacher education programmes. Truscott and Stenhouse (2018) found that teaching dispositions were associated with academic success and cultural competence. These dispositions were associated with the critical consciousness domain to a minimal extent. Specifically, the interrelatedness as a teacher disposition was associated with respect for diversity, authenticity, and generalizability.

From an extensive literature review, New America has developed eight interconnected competencies for culturally responsive teaching. These competencies would serve as a framework for preparing culturally responsive teacher education graduates. Muñiz (2019, pp. 12-15) enumerated them as: 1) "Reflect on one's cultural lens; 2) Recognize and redress bias in the system; 3) Draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction; 4) Bring real-world issues into the classroom; 5) Model high expectations for all students; 6) Promote respect for students differences; 7) Collaborate with families and the local community; and 8) Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways."

In a literacy methods course, practice teachers develop culturally relevant teaching behaviors and eventually prepare to work with diverse students (Scott & Venegas, 2019). Self (2018) argued for the need to design and use a clinical simulation in preparing practice teachers for culturally responsive teaching. She conceptualized CRT as being composed of cultural consciousness, cultural competence, and critical reflection. Wilcoxen, Steiner and Bell (2021) articulated the need to strengthen practice teachers' understanding of culturally responsive classrooms through exposure, immersion, and dialogue. These strategies may impact upon their comfort level and their abilities to actualize CRT strategies. French (2005) discovered a minimal contribution of the fieldwork component of teacher education programs to developing practice teachers' competence in CRT. Mackay and Strickland (2018) conducted qualitative research that explored how the interaction between students and teachers takes place and how the former respond to technology-based instructional materials with the aim of connecting to students' lives at home. The results show that involving the students within this CRT approach

by employing student-created videos informs the contribution of both the teacher and the students for connecting home and school contexts.

Mixed methods research revealed that practice teachers feel they were being prepared to acknowledge and integrate culture in the learning process and that they feel confident in their ability to employ culture and contextual teaching. They believe that employing culture will have positive outcomes (Richardson, 2018). Additionally, it was reported that practice teachers learned to use a variety of pedagogical practices to support the academic and social achievement of their students. These created safe spaces outside the classroom where learners can showcase authentic project outputs (Barnes, 2006).

Research has also revealed that practice teachers possess a fair level of readiness in culturally diverse classrooms when they have deep trust in their characteristics and personal attitudes toward diversity, which is considered a strength. Nevertheless, they are challenged with the anxiety of their poor cross-cultural knowledge and language skills (Singh & Akar, 2018). Christ and Sharma (2018) reported four categories of challenges encountered by practice teachers. These include resistance, limited view of culture, lack of knowledge about cultures and identities of students, and lack of opportunities for them to develop critical consciousness. Practice teachers identified criteria of success in CRT, which comprise knowledge about students' culture and identities, attention to various dimensions of text selection, and the use of culturally relevant text selection and pedagogy.

Lew, Gul, and Pecore (2021) found that practice teachers can make meaningful connections between the theory and practices of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching by associating academic concepts with students' life experiences. They were able to use instructional scaffolds and created a safe learning environment. However, they need further improvement on how to incorporate cultural diversity into their lessons, create a challenging but supportive classroom, and develop interactional scaffolds for language development. Thus, practicing CRT is challenging and this is why Howard et al. (2018) offer tools and resources to teachers to curb the popular myths of diverse families, their access to language and literature for teaching social justice, and the use of text that facilitates scaffolding in individual teachers' contexts.

Framework

This research is grounded in the work of Christy Rhodes (2016), whose idea of CRT was patterned after the scholarly works of Wlodkowski (2004) and Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009). These scholars raised central questions that gave birth to the motivation framework for culturally responsive teaching:

> How does the learning experience contribute to developing a community of learners who feel respected and connected to one another? How does this learning experience offer meaningful choices and promote personal relevance to contribute to a positive attitude? How does this learning experience engage participants in challenging learning? How does this learning experience create an understanding that participants are becoming more effective in learning the value and perceive as authentic to real world experience?
>
> Ginsberg and Wlodkowski 2009, p. 25)

The first question relates to inclusion, in particular to respect and connectedness. Establishing inclusion involves creating a learning environment in which both teachers and learners feel respected by and connected to one another. The second question concerns attitudes, specifically the choice and personal relevance. The learning experience should develop learners' positive and favorable attitudes. The third question necessitates the engagement of and challenges learners so they themselves can make learning meaningful when their values and perspectives are integrated into their learning. Lastly, the fourth question underlines the importance of competence, wherein learning experiences promote authenticity and effectiveness. Teachers need to create an understanding that learners have learned something in the teaching and learning process and that the learning is applicable to the real world (Rhodes, 2016; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2004). Gay (2010) defined CRT as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). This conceptual idea relates to the aforementioned underpinning.

Methodology

This research applied descriptive-correlational and cross-sectional methods to determine the CRT competence of 191 practice teachers across dimensions and the role of gender and degree programs in competency development. Participants were taking the Experiential Learning Courses at the Secondary School Laboratory, College of Education of the Bukidnon State University, Philippines. They were the first graduates of K to 12 programs in basic education, and they will be the first graduates of the new teacher education curriculum in the Philippines in the middle of 2022. Participants were recruited from the five specializations of the Bachelor of Secondary Education, namely, the BSEd Filipino (24), BSEd English (77), BSEd Science (22), BSEd Mathematics (32), and BSEd Social Studies (36). A few of them availed the limited face-to-face internship, while most of these individuals settled for full online and flexible learning modalities of practice teaching.

Figure 1
Representations from Five Degree Programs
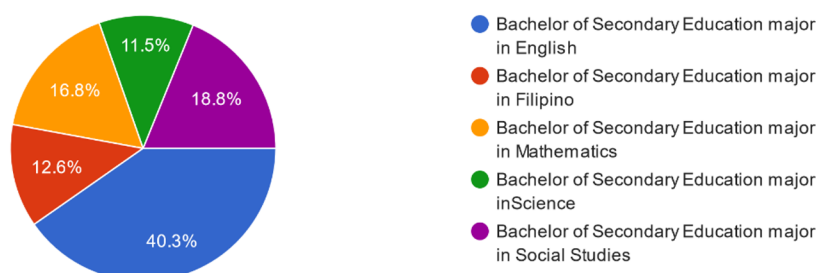
Prior to the data collection, the study secured permission from authorities to conduct the study. With the help of the academic advisers, wide dissemination of the assessment was achieved during training as these advisers facilitated the distribution of the questionnaires. Data were obtained using the 17-item CRT Survey tool developed by Rhodes (2016). It was administered via Google Forms during their redeployment training for in-campus and off-campus internships during the pandemic. The instrument has four dimensions: *establishing inclusion* (7 items),

developing attitudes (3 items), *enhancing meanings* (3 items), and *engendering competence* (4 items). Responses of the participants ranged from 1 (not true to me at all) to 5 (very true to me). Data were processed using IBM SPSS version 22 and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

To determine whether the measurement used in this research obtained an acceptable level of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was run to analyze the psychometric characteristics of the items. The results show that the CRT Survey tool of Rhodes (2016) is reliable. Both the standardized and unstandardized Cronbach's alpha values of .924 and .919, respectively, suggest that the tool can be used to measure the CRT competence of practice teachers. Consequently, it was determined that the CRT surveys can yield consistent results in the Philippine context.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on Standardized Items	N of items
.919	.924	17

Table 2
Item-Total Statistics

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item Deleted
Item1	67.1309	68.525	.637	.538	.914
Item2	66.9863	70.121	.541	.441	.916
Item3	67.3613	67.506	.397	.332	.923
Item4	66.8429	68.502	.635	.493	.914
Item5	67.2356	67.160	.594	.473	.914
Item6	67.3770	65.931	.600	.471	.915
Item7	67.1937	66.568	.670	.549	.912
Item8	66.8796	68.349	.662	.506	.913
Item9	67.1204	68.075	.649	.474	.913
Item10	67.0419	67.335	.661	.481	.913
Item11	67.2356	66.760	.589	.443	.915
Item12	67.3141	65.343	.685	.539	.912
Item13	67.0419	68.377	.558	.398	.915
Item14	67.0052	67.616	.697	.580	.912
Item15	67.1623	66.074	.678	.508	.912
Item16	67.2775	65.412	.731	.608	.910
Item17	66.8220	69.852	.520	.361	.916

In Table 3, the study assesses the competence of practice teachers in CRT in its four dimensions. The results indicate that among these dimensions, practice teachers can better demonstrate CRT in developing attitudes and engendering competence, which is both described as *very true to me*. This means they can create a favorable disposition toward personal relevance and learners' volition. At the same time, they can create an understanding that their learners can effectively learn about something they value the most and perceive such learning as authentic to their community. The results affirmed Özüdogru's (2018) research, which revealed that practice teachers believe they are highly ready for culturally responsive teaching. If these competencies are considered very true by the participants, practice teachers are indirectly claiming they are ready for the actual application of CRT in a classroom setting.

However, they only have an emerging competence in establishing inclusion and enhancing meanings. They still need to be trained on how to create a learning environment in which both learners and practice teachers can feel respected and connected to each other. Moreover, they need to further develop their competence in creating an engaging and challenging learning experience that integrates learners' perspectives and values. Both competencies are described as *true to me*. Noticeably, the fourth item, establishing inclusion by using mixed languages and mixed cultural pairing in group works, obtained the lowest response. This result signals that practice teachers need a certain level of intercultural and multicultural competence to be able to demonstrate competence in establishing inclusion. In one mixed methods study, practice teachers believed they possessed a fair level of readiness in several skills for responding to culturally diverse classrooms, while the qualitative data revealed that they had deep trust in their character and personal attitudes toward diversity, which was considered a strength. Moreover, they are challenged by their anxiety regarding their poor cross-cultural knowledge and language skills (Singh & Akar, 2018).

Table 3
Competence of Practice Teachers in Culturally Responsive Teaching

Dimensions/Items	Mean	SD	Description
Establishing Inclusion			
I can include lessons about the acculturation process.	4.18	.65	Very true to me
I can make an effort to get to know my students' families and background.	4.47	.65	Very true to me
I can learn words in my students' native languages.	4.07	.82	True to me
I can use mixed-language and mixed-cultural pairings in group work.	3.93	.92	True to me
I can encourage students to speak their native languages with their children.	4.27	.73	Very true to me
I can spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.	4.00	.87	True to me
I can include lessons about discrimination or bias.	4.27	.74	Very true to me
Overall Mean	4.17	.55	True to me

Developing Attitudes

I can examine class materials for culturally appropriate images and themes.	4.32	.59	Very true to me
I can use surveys to determine about my students' classroom preferences.	4.43	.64	Very true to me
I can elicit students' experiences in prereading and relistening activities.	4.19	.67	True to me
Overall Mean	4.31	.50	Very true to me

Enhancing Meanings

I can ask students to compare their culture with other cultures.	3.95	1.09	True to me
I can supplement the curriculum with lessons about local and community events.	4.30	.67	Very true to me
I can encourage students to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.	4.03	.82	True to me
Overall Mean	4.09	.68	True to me

Engendering Competence

I can use peer tutors or student-led discussions.	4.12	.78	True to me
I can have students work independently, selecting their own learning activities.	4.07	.86	True to me
I can ask for student input when planning lessons and activities.	4.15	.82	True to me
I can provide rubrics and progress reports to students.	4.49	.63	Very true to me
Overall Mean	4.21	.58	Very true to me

Notes: 4.20-5.00 – Very true to me; 3.40-4.20- True to me; 2.60-3.39-Somewhat true to me; 1.80-2.59- A little bit true to me; 1.00-1.79- Not true to me at all

Table 4 correlates the four subscales or dimensions of practice teachers' competence in culturally responsive teaching. The results indicate a statistically positive and significant relationship. Their competence in establishing inclusion has a positive and significant relationship with their competencies in developing attitudes ($r=.732^{**}$, $p<0.01$), enhancing meanings ($r=.676^{**}$, $p<0.01$), and engendering the competence of learners ($r=.783^{**}$, $p<0.01$). This means that the better they can create a learning environment that fosters respect and connectedness, the better they can create a learning experience with a favorable disposition towards being engaging and challenging, effective and authentic, and vice versa. Additionally, their competence in developing attitudes has a positive and significant relationship with their competence in enhancing meanings ($r=.659^{**}$, $p<0.01$), and engendering competence. This means that the better they can create a favorable disposition toward learning through personal relevance and volition, the greater they can make the learning experience of learners engaging and challenging, and the greater they can create an understanding that every learner can effectively learn something of value to them that is relevant to their real-world experiences. Lastly, practice teachers' competence in enhancing meaning is positively and significantly correlated with their engendering competence ($r=.629^{**}$, $p<0.01$).

Table 4

Pearson r Correlating Competence of Practice Teachers across Subscales of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Subscales	EI	DA	EM	EC
EI		.732**	.676**	.784**
		.000	.000	.000
DA	.732**		.659**	.696**
	.000		.000	.000
EM	.676**	.659**		.629**
	.000	.000		
EC	.784**	.696**	.629**	
	.000	.000	.000	

Notes: **significant at the 0.01 level of significance.
          EI- Establishing Inclusion; DA- Developing Attitudes; EM- Enhancing Meanings;
          EC- Engendering Competence

Table 5

T Test for Independent Sample- Comparing the CRT Competence of Male and Female Practice Teachers

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig.
Establishing Inclusion	Male	53	3.98	.61	-3.034	189	.003
	Female	138	4.24	.51			
Developing Attitudes	Male	53	4.18	.58	-.2.253	189	.025
	Female	138	4.36	.45			
Enhancing Meanings	Male	53	4.01	.68	-1.014	189	.312
	Female	138	4.13	.68			
Engendering Competence	Male	53	4.02	.61	-2.695	189	.008
	Female	138	4.28	.56			

One of the intentions of the study was to verify the role of gender and academic programs/specializations in the competence development of practice teachers in culturally responsive teaching. A t-test for independent samples revealed that there was a significant difference in the competence of practice teachers in establishing inclusion (*t= -3.034, df=189, p<0.05*), developing attitudes (*t= - 2.253, df=189, p<0.05*), and engendering competence (*t= -2.695, df=189, p<0.05*), except for enhancing meaning (*t= -1.014, df=189, p>0.05*). Thus, female practice teachers are better than their male counterparts in creating a learning experience with respect and connectedness that promotes choice and personal relevance, engages in challenging learning, and supports authenticity and effectiveness. These results contradict previous findings that there exist no significant differences in CRT knowledge and practices of teachers in terms of gender (Heitner & Jennings, 2016). Additionally, Özüdogru (2018) also reported that gender did not influence prospective teachers' personal, professional and total readiness for culturally responsive teaching.

Table 6

ANOVA- Comparing the CRT Competence of Practice Teachers according to Academic Programs

Dimensions	Groupings	SS	df	MS	F	sig.
Establishing Inclusion	Between Groups	1.358	4	.340	1.108	.354
	Within Groups	56.979	186	.306		
	Total	58.337	190			
Developing Attitudes	Between Groups	2.223	4	.556	2.257	.065
	Within Groups	45.800	186	.246		
	Total	48.022	190			
Enhancing Meanings	Between Groups	3.411	4	.853	1.864	.119
	Within Groups	85.081	186	.457		
	Total	88.492	190			
Engendering Competence	Between Groups	1.553	4	.388	1.121	.348
	Within Groups	64.403	186	.346		
	Total	65.955	190			

The results show that a degree program or specialization has nothing to do with the competence of practice teachers in CRT across dimensions. This means further that the nature of specialization of practice teachers cannot give them the advantage in creating a learning experience for culturally responsive teaching. Thus, a degree program in itself does not play a significant role in CRT competence development.

Conclusion

This research assessed the competence of practice teachers in culturally responsive teaching, correlated the multiple dimensions of this competence, and verified the role of gender and degree programs in its development. Generally, practice teachers were competent in culturally responsive teaching. Thus, they were capable of demonstrating competence in developing attitudes and engendering competence, while their competence in establishing inclusion and enhancing meanings is still emerging. The four dimensions of their competence in CRT were positively and significantly correlated. Indeed, gender played a role in acquiring competence in CRT, which in turn demonstrated that female practice teachers were better off than their counterparts in creating a learning experience that is culturally responsive. On the other hand, a degree program or specialization does not play the same role as gender. Thus, no matter what major field or specialization practice teachers are affiliated with, this does not give them an advantage for acquiring and practicing CRT.

The findings above have practical implications for CRT practice, future research, and theory development. Practice teachers may be able to actualize their competency in CRT as they with their cooperating teachers further expose themselves to an actual classroom where they meet students from various cultural backgrounds. An internship program may be a venue for them to apply this competence in CRT. The internship they are currently taking would be their opportunity to interface theory and practice on establishing inclusion, developing attitudes, enhancing meanings, and engendering the competence of their learners. The period after their

graduation is a time for them to transition from their conceptual and theoretical understanding of CRT to its actual application.

Future research may focus on investigating variables other than gender and degree programs that may play a role in developing competence in CRT. Longitudinal research may be performed to trace how competence progresses over time from the first-time practice teachers come to the university up to the last year in college. It is also critical to identify the component of the curriculum that contributes to the development of practice teachers' competence in CRT.

Overall, the findings from this study represent a contribution to the further theoretical development of CRT, and especially so for the motivation framework for CRT as previously demonstrated by the seminal works of Wlodkowski (2004), Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009), and Gay (2010).

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Corresponding Author: Manuel E. Caingcoy
Email: manuelcaingcoy@buksu.edu.ph

Tikbubulan: Transitions from Folk Song to Creative Dance

Erwin Oscar P. Ripalda
Eastern Visayas State University, Tacloban City, Philippines

Abstract

This article tells the story of a teacher creating a dance based on a traditional folk song that has been sung for generations. Since most Philippine folk dances have been studied and created based on the culture of a particular group of people, this study contributes to its wide array of already existing ones. The researcher made use of mimicking a bird which is the theme of the folk song. This included the movements of the bird when it stretches, flies with other birds, its courting movements and how it moves or hops about. These traits are personified in the humorous or playful character of the *Waray* people. Since studying Philippine folk dance is part of the school curriculum, it is imperative that instructional materials be developed to make the delivery of instructions more meaningful, enjoyable and rewarding with the use of existing materials which are already familiar to students such as folk songs. Using the cultural study as its design, the study explores a new dance based on the *Tikbubulan* folksong. Basic movements and steps were taken from the dance steps introduced by Francisca Reyes Aquino. Other dance steps were created through the creativity of the choreographer so as to show clearly the characteristics of the *Tikbubulan* bird and how people mimic it. Despite the cultural influence of other countries, education has a role to play in the preservation of Philippine culture which gives identity to its people and is different from that of other countries around the world.

Keywords: creative dance, dance, folk songs, Tikbubulan dance

Introduction

Dancing is deeply embedded in the cultural spirit of Filipinos. Tracing back to the oldest dated dances, folkloric dances and even modern-day dances, Philippine culture has been molded through time by them (Seasite, 2021). The influence from other countries is considered as contributory to Philippine culture which makes it unique from other countries around the world. The teaching of dance has been part of the Philippine educational system and has been recognized throughout history to be functionally significant to education. As dances branched out into many different forms, education plays an important role in establishing a curriculum designed to create a wider perspective of human expression. It provides deep thought-provoking experiences combined with other disciplines and art forms and stimulates the conscious understanding of movements and develops aesthetic knowledge and skill expressed through movement (Indeo, 2021).

Similarly, most Philippine folk dances are commonly accompanied by folk music with or without lyrics. Folk music is transmitted orally or aurally, learned through hearing rather than reading the lyrics or notation. These are learned not in schools or in church but in small social networks of relatives or friends (Nettl, 2020). Cultural practices of spontaneously creating one's own lines melodically about individual feelings, the environment, making a baby sleep, and even selling goods and food through singing are performed and experienced by many. These activities make work lighter and less burdensome. Just like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of naturalism of, singing while working is an activity our ancestors considered natural. For them, anything that exists in the surroundings is nature itself without the hustle and bustle of the busy life in the city.

In the Visayas, some folk songs from unknown origins are sung either by individual singers or chorale groups not knowing their origin but who are aware of their existence. Songs that are sung on the farm are considered part of "low culture" compared to "high culture" as identified by Rousseau and other 19th century critics who considered folk music as music produced by the local folks such as peasants musically expressing their way of life.

In rural areas, farmers gather together during rest periods in order to relieve themselves from hard work. It is during this time that they share their own life experiences through songs that are spontaneously composed using the dialect of Leyte and Samar which is *Winaray*. The melody is also created by them, making it an enjoyable and fun activity for people spending time together after a day's work or under the moonlit sky.

At present, it is disheartening to know that spontaneous singing is no longer practiced; fortunately, the songs still exist. To make such songs more memorable, it would be best to give life to them by converting them into a creative dance. Though the origin of the song may be unknown, it still reflects the way of life or culture of the people.

Philippine folk dance is part of the high school and tertiary Physical Education curriculum. Many folk dances have been published as reference materials for teachers teaching dance. It would take several years before there would be an addition to the existing ones and would be a breakthrough if ever there would be an addition to it. Adopting a new dance would support academe's efforts to preserve Waray culture and fulfil the mandate of Republic Act No. 10533 Implementing Rules and Regulations on the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 on the use of local instructional materials.

Different regions of the country already have published folk dances while other local dances still remain unpublished. Plain instrumental music of a familiar folk song accompanies some folk dances while others have lyrics as well. Basically, a folk song and a folk dance are separate entities that can stand alone. The researcher responsible for this study decided to integrate a folk song into a creative dance. Keeping the goal of enhancing the curriculum in mind, youths would be given an awareness of what Philippine culture is and demonstrate the innovations that can be applied to the use of folk songs set to a dance as a contribution to cultural preservation.

The farm in tropical countries is the most common place where songs about nature begin. Nature is the common theme of most of the songs, oftentimes speaking of birds due to their abundance in these areas. The flaming sunbird (scientific name: *Aethopyga flgrans*) or *Tikbubulan* in the Winaray dialect, is the one mimicked in the current study. It is a small bird with a red spot on its breast, a downward-curved slender bill, fast wing flaps, and movements that are sharp and angular (Avian Web, 2011).

The history of dance can be illustrated by Egyptian cave paintings (Dance Facts, 2021). Many Philippine dances have also been in existence in many parts of the country such as folk festivals, and ritual dances have been researched and studied. The tribes of Luzon: Ifugao, Benguet, Kalinga, Bontoc, and Apayao have folk and cultural dances representing different factions in one way or another (Cebu's Famous Cultural Center – The Jungle Cultural Entertainment).

The *Tarektek* from Benguet depicts the courting of woodpeckers (www.dancepinoy, 2009). In Mindanao, a dance that mimics the motions of fish is the *Tahing Baila* which is performed by the lowland tribes (muslimdances.wordpress.com, 2016). In the Visayas, originated from the province of Surigao, there is *Itik-itik* which imitates the movements of a duck, such as wading, flying, splashing water on their backs, and their short walking steps (Danceask, 2019).

Dance researchers have not only contributed to the preservation of Philippine culture and the arts; contributions have also been made to other dance genres such as contemporary dance and Philippine traditional dances. In the Philippines, cultural dance groups such as the Leyte Kalipayan of Eastern Visayas perform traditional dances (www.kalipayan.org.,2016), the Ramon Ubusan Dance Group, and the Bayanihan dance group performs indigenous dances (*Bayanihan*, 2003) wherein the dances that are performed are based on academic research.

The use of unpublished songs in dances has yet to be treated academically in detail. Some work of unpublished songs and dances of Leyte and Samar have been conducted. Arteche (1982) studied unpublished folk songs while Arbas (1987) conducted a study on unpublished Leyte folk dances: *Gaway-Gaway, Kuratcha, Binongto-an, Likod-likod, Mag-aso,* and *Inagta.* Other materials such as a cantata were used by De Paz (1998) while Ripalda (1998) modified folk dances to creative dances as an instructional material in teaching Physical Education. On the concept of folk dance, research was conducted by Namiki (2011) which found that today's academic discourse on culture is mostly hybrid. Philippine folk dances, and here specifically Spanish-influenced dances, are examples of such hybrid dances, for they are not purely Filipino compared to local folk dances and indigenous/ethnic from non-Christian regions.

Research has been conducted not only in the realm of Philippine dances but also on other dance forms such as contemporary dance. Both types of dances give researchers the material to conduct studies that may not only focus on choreography. This also includes the dance space

or the location where they are performed. Morrison (2015) utilized dance and film to create a movement experience of a place. In the study at hand, the researcher used an existing folk song as a reference in order to create a new dance embodying the characteristics of the *tikbubulan* bird and the people of Region 8 (Eastern Visayas).

With this text, the researcher would like to inspire dance teachers, choreographers, dance enthusiasts, and other researchers to make use of their skills in order to develop new dances based on Philippine folk songs. Not all folk songs have a corresponding dance but having a dance would make them into long-lasting material that can contribute to cultural preservation both in music and dance through education. Similarly, Region 8 lacks literature on newly created dances as additional materials for teaching in high school and at the tertiary level. There are many folk dances that have yet to be embraced and treasured. There exists an awareness among teachers of the lack of knowledge on preserving dances used in schools, and many are unclear on what solution could be found to this problem. This study serves as a guide or pattern for future researchers and dance teachers on how to contribute to the dearth of newly created dances.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the following theories: John Dewey's Theory of Experience (1892), the Social Sciences Dance Theory (1990), and the Theory of Structuration (1984).

John Dewey's Theory of Experience (1892) on continuity and interaction states that the present is the continuity of the past and is future matter. The present situation is influenced by past experiences and the present moment has an impact on experiences of the future. Interaction is identified in living the present experience that arises from the interaction of the past and present situation.

In culture, the past, present, and future are strongly connected to each other. Philippine folk dances and Philippine folk songs for example have been in existence for many generations. It is from these beginnings that we learn about them in the present. Some of these songs and dances are unpublished material that is already used in the present. However, due to the popularization of pop and hip-hop dances which have influenced the young generation, Philippine culture, and specifically traditional dances, are greatly affected. The present generation should be made aware of the fact that our culture gives us our identity, just as is the case in other countries around the world. When folk songs have a paired folk dance, this would be beneficial in the future and might have a pioneering effect, spurring on further research in a region and thereby preserving Filipino culture.

The present study is also anchored in anthropological and sociological Social Sciences Dance Theory (1990). The philosophy of this study is closely related to that of a choreographer's philosophy and conceptualization, for it considers and involves social and cultural interaction. In dance, there exists interaction between the performers and the audience, the performer and choreographer, and the performer with other performers. Dance is always part of a certain community and would not exist without a contextualizing society.

Along dance theory lines, this study can be classified as a cultural study (Andrée Grau, 2016). Dance has been part of human evolution and is associated with the acquisition of language; therefore, dance in culture has the ability to move individuals, and in time, have them collaborate with others. Intellect is based on reason and cognition, and in dance is integrated

with feelings and emotions, thus making it a powerful art medium. In creating the dance, the researcher concentrated on the dance features related to cultural matters by displaying the regional identity, traits, and characteristics of the people of Region 8. The created dance can be classified as a rural dance that depicts the life of a "lower-class" community and differs from Spanish-influenced dances that identify the "upper-class" members of society.

Lastly, Gidden's Theory of Structuration (1984) notes that social forces do not determine social life but rather, it is random individual acts that are constitutive. He suggests that individuals produce the social structures which include morale, traditions and institutions or organizations from the repetitive actions related to social culture when people ignore, replace or reproduce them differently.

Diverse themes are used in dance to create an artistic work wherein integrating the theme of a song into movement is one. As Philippine folk songs are passed down through the generations, these may be forgotten especially if they are unpublished. With the artistic approach of the choreographer, a folk song might be easily remembered if coupled with dance. The song itself would identify what the theme of the dance would be, e.g. themes about nature that have been part of or can be observed in a community.

The teaching of folk dances is one way of imparting knowledge about dance in culture. Didactically, giving the historical background of the dance lets students know how it has become a part of a culture and understand the importance of preserving it. Oftentimes, there exists a negative attitude in the students when it comes to learning traditional dance because of its alleged simplicity. Effective teaching strategies would bring about a change from a negative attitude to a positive attitude in the students and one way of effecting this is letting them perform something new such as a folk dance created from a folk song.

Statement of Objectives

This study primarily aims to create a dance from the Waray-Waray folksong, *Tikbubulan,* and attain the following objectives:

1. To create a new dance based on the *Tikbubulan* folksong with corresponding dance literature and cultural background.
2. To create a musical arrangement for the creative dance.
3. To design a costume for the creative dance.
4. To develop a new theory in dance.

Research Design

This study employed a cultural approach by studying how the investigated "culture" transforms everyday individual experiences, social relationships, power, and symbolic activities as a distinctive way of life. It is based on methods and theories from studies on sociology, literature, communication, history, and cultural anthropology that addresses questions and problems that adapt to the rapidly changing world, but is also a domain where collective tasks begin to grapple as communities change in time. Cultural studies also help diverse groups and societies come to terms with community life (Cultural Studies UNC, 2016).

The researcher adopted some of the basic steps provided by Francisca Aquino and applied as well his own creativity in dance composition. The results from the guided interview of the

informants who are music lovers, dance and music experts, and literature and social science teachers aged 60 and above were also considered. They gave their interpretation and understanding of the song and the lyrics to be used by the researcher to be able to produce a new creative dance that will be an addition to the local dances of the region.

Research Procedure

The researcher employed the following procedures in the creation of the new dance.

1. The researcher adopted the folk song *Tikbubulan* (An English translation can be found in Appendix A).
2. Interviews were conducted with ten (10) informants to solicit their personal interpretation of the folk song.
3. The creative process included the following: (a) a musical arrangement was made to fit as an accompaniment of the dance; (b) the dance composition was based on the basic steps created by Francisca Aquino, and the researcher then added his own movements based on the informant's interpretation of the folk song; and (c) for the costume design, colors used are similar to those displayed by male *tikbubulan* birds. The style of the costume was also patterned on Visayan peasant farmer's garments: Camisa chino, a collarless chest-buttoned long-sleeved shirt and any kind of colored trousers for the boys; balloon skirt of calf length and blouse with bell-shaped sleeves for the girls.
4. The thus created dance was evaluated by a panel of eleven (11) experts who are dance choreographers, dance researchers, dance teachers, dance enthusiasts, local culture and arts experts, music teachers, school administrators, literary critics, and musicians using a self-structured evaluation form.

The results were also analyzed using the *frequency* to determine the common or the majority of each scale (1-5) per item. They were guided by the criteria developed by Suzanne Youngerman (1998) of the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies. Some modifications were made to the criteria based on the suggestions of the panelists, to wit:

a. Level of Complexity – The dance must have easy-to-learn steps, ranging from simple to moderately difficult.
b. Tradition – The dance can be transmitted from generation to generation through integration into the local schools' curriculum's and the adaptation by the community.
c. Dance Context – The created dance mimics the characteristics of the *Tikbubulan* bird of Region 8- that of being quick and full of joy and gaiety that gives inspiration to the dance. It thereby can represent local behavioral patterns.
d. Cultural Relevance – Folk dance is an integral part of community life linked to specific occasions. The dance can be performed by males and females, on any occasion as a part of any social gathering.
e. Functions – The dance promotes a sense of community. It continues to make dancers feel that they are part of a regional or national group and help in establishing ties with their heritage.
f. Body Movements – Movements are imitative in nature such as the flapping of the arms which represents the movement of the wings of the bird and the back of the wrist is placed one (1) foot away in front of the forehead representing the beak of the bird.

g. Floor Patterns – Various spatial formations and progressions are used in the choreography. The floor pattern may have symbolic meaning. Formation of the dancers may be side by side, may or may not touch each other, or may follow one another.

h. Musical Accompaniment - The dance is accompanied by a recorded rondalla or piano music. The music is pre-set and originates from an established but unpublished folk song from Region 8.

i. Costume – The design of the costume worn by dancers affects the nature of their movements. The flowing skirts of the girls give them sufficient room for leg movement. The visual appeal of the dance is enhanced by the colorful costumes of the female dancers and the color-coordinated combination of the upper garment and trousers of the men suited to the idea and character of the dance.

Figure 2 in Appendix B shows the conceptual framework of the study.

Data Analysis

The result of the evaluation of the panel of experts includes the nine (9) criteria, the frequency of each item, and their respective scale descriptions depending on the frequency. This was used to analyze the data gathered.

The level of complexity received a total evaluation of seven (7) for "Moderately Difficult", two (2) for "Easy", one (1) for "Difficult" and (1) for "Very Easy". The researcher removed one (1) figure (Figure 6) and repeated Figure 3 to lessen its difficulty. On the Body Movements, five (5) evaluated it as "Easy", four (4) as "Moderately Difficult", one (1) as "Difficult" and (1) as "Very Easy". No modifications to the movements were made except for one (1) figure (Figure 6).

On the part of Tradition, five (5) evaluated it as "Conforms to the Tradition to a Great Extent", three (3) "Conforms to the Tradition to a Moderately Extent", two (2) "Conforms to the Tradition to a Very Great Extent", and one (1) for "Conforms to the Tradition to Less Extent". This indicates that the dance has the elements of being part of tradition, especially that the dance would be contributory to cultural preservation. The Dance Context evaluation resulted in five (5) "Mimics the Character of the Tikbubulan Bird to a Great Extent", three (3) "Mimics the Character of the Tikbubulan Bird to a Very Great Extent", two (2) "Mimics the Character of the Tikbubulan Bird to a Moderately Great Extent", and one (1) for "Mimics the Character of the Tikbubulan Bird to a Lesser Extent", all of which are indicative that being playful and energetic was depicted in the character of the dance, mirroring Taclobanons' philosophy of life. On the part of Cultural Relevance, five (5) evaluated it as "Highly Relevant", four (4) as "Relevant", and two (2) as "Moderately Relevant", which is indicative of the dance being considered as a material that can be performed during various occasions. On Function had an evaluation of five (5) on "Promotes a Sense of Community Life to a Great Extent", three (3) "Promotes a Sense of Community Life to a Very Great Extent, and (3) "Promotes a Sense of Community Life to a Moderately Great Extent considering that the music used in the dance has been part of the community and that the bird being mimicked is also found in the community illustrating the way of life of the people. Floor Patterns had an evaluation of seven (7) as "Varies to a High Extent", two (2) as "Varies to a Very High Extent", and two (2) as "Varies to a Moderately High Extent". Different floor patterns were used to create a lively depiction of how the birds travel and chase each other playfully. On the part of musical accompaniment, six (6) evaluated it as "Very Good", two (2) as "Excellent", two (2) as "Good", and one (1) as "Fair". Based on the result, the music was not changed and the ¾ time signatures was kept. For

the Costumes, five (5) evaluated them as "Very Good", three (3) as "Excellent", two (2) as "Fair" and one (1) as "Good". Costumes were designed in such a way that they would display the physical attributes of the bird and fit the mobility necessary for the dancers.

Verbal Critique

Evaluators mentioned that the dance had to have simple movements since it will be used as a material for localization and indigenization of instruction, particularly in MAPEH (music, arts, physical education, and health) competencies, and can be performed by all types of performers. Students of the lower to higher grades must be able to perform the dance with less effort need not be very simple and must be found to be enjoyable.

The choice of movements depicting the *Tikbubulan* bird gave the characteristics of the traits of Taclobanons where the bird can be found. The Introduction to the dance was impressive and unique. The whole dance was the end result of what is seen as the artist's own creative mind for such artwork. The choreography of the dance did depict the nature and movements of the *Tikbubulan* bird was recognized to imitate the bird. This means that the audience who will be watching the dance would have an idea that it has been patterned from nature and the movements are recognized to imitate a bird without having to understand the purpose of it being created.

Dance Literature

The *tikbubulan* has the characteristics of Taclobanons, being quick and full of joy that gave inspiration to the dance seen in the jumping and swift movements. Stretching of the wings is also mimicked and the costume depicts the bird's colorful plumage and the stretching of a single wing sideward or with both wings backward. The costumes also depict the bird's colorful plumage.

Peculiar Dance Movements

Peculiar movements in the dance are: (a) jumping and leaping; (b) flapping movement (accented in going upwards, low, mid, and high) and stretching of arms/wings; (c) sharp movements of the head and body; and (d) shaking of hips and shoulders.

Arm Movements

There are three arm movements in the dance. These are described as follows:

1. Arm movement no.1
   Arms flapping, slightly bent at sides in shoulder level leading with the wrist. Palm facing down starting downwards in the downbeat count 1, accented in going upward at shoulder level count 2, and overhead level count 3. One flap down and up in every measure.
2. Arm movement no. 2
   From waist level, palms left over right together in front. Fingers together and palm facing down, extending overhead obliquely front R and L alternately like a pecking sequence (counts 1,2). Hands down in front to waist level (count 3).

3. Arm movement no. 3
    Right arm in front of forehead approximately one-foot distance (count 1), palm facing down and fingers together pointing forward extending or straighten to the front in a pecking manner (counts 2,3), left wrist rested at the back of waist fingers together pointing back.

Dance Composition

The dance has seven (7) figures, namely: Entrance, Introduction, Saludo (Greeting), Figure I Courting, Figure II Interacting, Figure III Group Flying / Shaking / Pecking, Figure IV Wing Stretch, Figure V Kissing, Figure VI which is a repetition of Figure III except flying movement, Figure VII Chasing and Exit. Dancers are in pairs approximately six (6) feet apart with the Girl standing on the right side of the Boy.

Musical Arrangement

The instruments used to accompany the dance are a Rondalla orchestra or the piano. The time signature is in 3/4 composed of A, B, and C parts. Counting is 1, 2, 3 to a measure. *Tikbubulan* music was arranged in three forms: Music A, B, and C with two measures created for the bowing as practiced in all folk dances as a sign of respect by acknowledging the audience or partner. The musical arrangement of the main dance was in an A, A, B, C, C, B, B form having sixteen measures per figure in 3/4 time. Eight measures were added to music B for the Exit. Musical arrangement and notation to serve as an accompaniment to the dance were created by Melvin Corpin with the involvement of the researcher.

Costume Design

Girls wear a red blouse with violet-colored bell-shaped sleeves to symbolize the wings and a black skirt at calf-length as part of the bird's plumage A dominant yellow plaid *tapis,* a piece of cloth worn around the waist overlaying the skirt, and *alampay,* a strip of cloth worn on the shoulder, with a yellow headband are added as accessories to represent Visayan rural design. Boys wear red shade calf-length trousers with plain a yellow *Camisa chino,* a collarless chest-buttoned long-sleeved shirt to represent the dominant bird color and Visayan peasant design. A red scarf is added to symbolize the identity of the *tikbubulan* bird having red feathers on its chest. No footwear is used since the dance depicts rural farm life and, literally, the bird's feet are colorless which harmonizes with the earth's hues and bareness. The costume is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Illustration of Costume Design

Summary

This study primarily aimed to create a dance from the Waray-Waray folksong, *Tikbubulan*. The study sought to attain the following objectives:

1. To create a new dance-based from the *Tikbubulan* folksong with corresponding dance literature and cultural background.
2. To create a musical arrangement for the creative dance.
3. To design a costume for the creative dance.
4. To develop a new theory in dance.

The transition of a Waray folk song into a creative dance involved three (3) creative processes namely: musical arrangement, dance composition, and costume design. The music was arranged by a renowned musical director interpreting the suggestions of the researcher. The created dance mimics the particular movements of the *tikbubulan* bird through the accented movements of the head and the wings. The formations and/or arrangement of the dancers depict the courting and chasing of birds. Costume design adapts the colors of the bird more appropriately than the one used in the initial version of the dance making it more staunchly relevant.

Based on this this experience, the researcher has come up with his own dance theory called the **"Song-Dance Correspondence Theory".** This theory states that the rhythmic movements or step patterns of a creative dance must be associated with the concept or theme of the song and do not literally have to follow all the lyrics. Folk songs as a representation of a certain culture and their authenticity in a certain community continue to be culturally relevant. Transforming this folk song into a creative dance, the dance choreographer/researcher brought out the distinctive appeal or predominant quality of the folk song and its concept was transferred by

means of the chosen choreography. The dance movements may not literally relate to the lyrics of the song, but they interact with and depict the subject matter of the song.

Furthermore, the objective of cultural preservation is to be able to contribute to existing folk songs and dances in Region 8. The *Tikbubulan* dance was created to enrich the existing number of folk dances that can be used in teaching dance, particularly in the K-12 program of the Department of Education (Dep Ed). The song describes the story related to the bird while the dance movements depict the actual movements showing its characteristics. One might also draw a relation between the bird song and dance and certain features and cultural attitudes and behaviors in the Warays' ritualized courtship behaviour. Some movements of the bird that are imitated in the dance are the flapping of the wings and head movements which are accented. It jumps instead of walking due to its lightness and tiny size. Another is the stretching of the wings which is common to all birds but in this kind, it is done in a slow-motion unfolding, and followed by a fast-paced refolding. The movement of its beak as it pecks was also incorporated into and imitated in the dance. Its physical attributes can also be seen in the costumes of the dancers. The dance created can now further contribute to the establishment of a cultural identity for the Taclobanons as fun-loving, fascinating, and festive people.

The comments and suggestions of the panel of experts were also helpful. This study, which is the result of the artist's own creative work, brings to the fore the importance of local culture vis-a-vis the growing influence of western culture that diverts the interest of the young generation away from their traditional culture. As stated above, the dance had to be based on simple movements since it will be used as a material for localization of instruction, and can thus be performed by all types of performers. Students from the lower to higher grades must be able to perform the dance with little effort and in an enjoyable way.

Conclusion

On the basis of his experience in creating this dance, the researcher would like to submit the following conclusions: More published and unpublished folk songs should be adapted and paired with a creative dance for cultural preservation; that a folk song can be arranged to serve as an accompaniment to a creative dance; for clarity and effectiveness of the created dance movement, it should be associated with the background and theme of the folk song; the musical arrangement would serve as the accompaniment and costume design needs to conform with and conform to the dance movements and its theme; such dance composition can receive notation, and literature and background for the dance needs to be consulted for preservation and permanent recording; lastly, the choreographer may consider the concept of a folk song in order to relate the dance having the same appeal as the song.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following from the findings and conclusions: Dance researchers and choreographers should provide a written record of creative dance compositions to help dance instructors, PE teachers, and students in executing the dance authentically; Waray folk songs should have a separate musical arrangement ready to be utilized as an accompaniment of a dance; costumes should be designed appropriately, carefully considering the theme and movements used; dance teachers and choreographers should attend seminar-workshops on dance interpretation and "Aquinotation", a well-established and very useful method of writing dance literature as proposed by Francisca Aquino. This helps teachers to be efficient in writing dance literature and teach competently for better cultural preservation and

development; the created dance may be introduced and included in PE competences for all grade levels including tertiary schools; and the creative dance should correspond to the concept or theme of the song to be easily understood by the students/performers and viewers.

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Corresponding author: Erwin Ripalda
Email: erwin.ripalda@evsu.edu.ph

Appendix A

Tikbubulan Folksong English Translation

Once there was a *Tikbubulan* bird
Which I almost captured with my hands
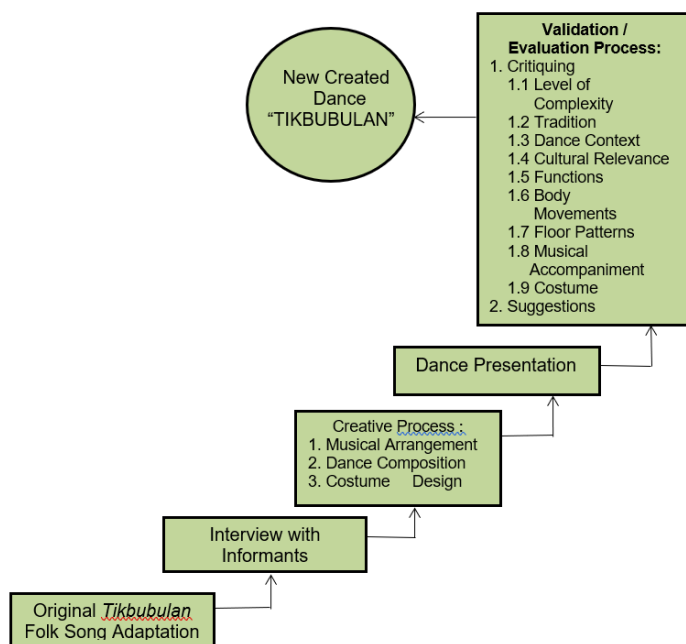But its view was blocked
By tall coconut trees

If it were not for the fan
My body would be weary
My body would faint
Without sweating so much

Oh the owl
Soaring in the sky
Oh the black bird
Flying in the heavens

Oh the owl
Soaring in the sky
Oh the black bird
Has flown up into the heavens

Appendix B

Figure 2
Schema Showing the Research Flow

Life Writing by Kuwaiti Women: Voice and Agency

Shahd Alshammari
Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait

Abstract

Life narratives are rare in the Gulf region due to many issues. Kuwait women's writing about their lives, bodies, illnesses, and disabilities is almost unheard of. This article considers two texts by contemporary Kuwaiti women and situates their illness narratives within Kuwait's social context. By writing about their illness and disability, the authors re-claim their voice and agency, writing their silenced bodies as Helene Cixous urges women to write through *Écriture feminine*. This article examines two texts from a comparative perspective, highlighting themes of disability, mental illness, and healing through writing.

Keywords: disability, illness, Kuwait, Middle East, women

Arabic literature boasts many narratives of women's place in society and their oppression, and has placed women at the forefront of many texts, centering their experiences through creating memorable protagonists. Although Arabic literature has a plethora of female protagonists who must contend with different social, political, and socioeconomic issues, there remains a lack of narratives dealing with disability and illness. Most Arabic literature does not include narratives of women's embodiment and disability. In her influential study *The Female Suffering Body* (2014), Abir Hamdar addresses the absent figure of the disabled and/or ill female subject in Arabic literature from the 1950s to 2000. She also considers contemporary Arabic literature and its treatment of illness and subsequent stigmatizing of disabled women's bodies. Not only was the disabled female figure absent from Arabic literature in the past, but contemporary depictions continue to stigmatize and other the devalued female body. Women who fail to perform ideal femininity include disabled and/or ill characters who are either punished or killed at the end of the narrative. These characters are usually regarded as tragic heroines, fallen women, and have no place within 'proper' society. Arabic literature has not dealt with the disabled female body in terms of centering the disabled female subject as protagonist. Even more significantly, in the Gulf region, there remains a staggering lack of interest in disabled female protagonists. This article considers two texts by Kuwaiti women authors: *Notes on the Flesh* by myself and *In/coherence: a layered account of a Kuwaiti woman's post-psychotic self-in-progress* by Fajr Almajed. Through utilizing an autoethnographical lens, I consider my experience writing a life narrative, my goals writing the narrative, and its reception. The two texts, both published in 2017, are not straight-forward accounts of disability and illness, but rather the only two texts written by Kuwaiti women who navigate the stigmatization of illness and disability in Kuwait. Both texts speak about their lived experiences of illness and disability. By placing these two texts alongside each other, I consider how life narratives provide critical insight into cultural ideologies of illness and disability. Both narratives reveal the significance of reclaiming voice and women writing their lives and bodies.

According to Hamdar, "Arab studies on chronic illness, disability, and other physical ailments have mainly provided statistical data and medical findings rather than targeted the social and cultural scope of these and other illness" (17). As such, finding disability-centered narratives is a futile task. Male writers who did include female characters with disabilities do so to arrive at a narrative of punishment, sin, and redemption. Illness and disability become an affliction that is the result of rebelling against the patriarchal discourse and society. Many times, a woman's disabled/ill body becomes a metonym for the nation, thus taking away from the individual experience of disability and illness, reducing the ill body to a metonym for the nation's suffering. Hamdar's text also deals exclusively with Arab nations including Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, but does not consider Gulf literature and its treatment of disabled characters. More research from the global south is necessary, as Anita Ghai argues in "Disability and Social Movements" and suggests that a "social and cultural apartheid is sustained by the existence of a built environment which lacks amenities for the disabled" (12). In the same vein, the Gulf states have a sustained environment which erases disabled and ill narratives. The Gulf remains a fruitful area for literary scholarship on disabled and ill protagonists. The record shows that disability is stigmatized in Kuwait and women's bodies remain taboo subjects, both in culture and in literature. Disabled Kuwaiti women are not found in the literature on Kuwait nor in its fiction. There is a complete erasure of the disabled protagonist or memoirist. As such, for Arab women to write their bodies and disabilities, this is a political act in itself, an act of protest that writes back against patriarchal discourse that continues to oppress women.

In order for disability to be part of the literary conversation, narratives that center disabled female protagonists are crucial. Disability in Kuwait remains a subject that is almost unheard of and there is much stigma surrounding disabled people. Like other countries in the Gulf, disabled women, in particular, are most disadvantaged. They face social discrimination and prejudice and are regarded as lacking in femininity because they are considered to be not abled-bodied. Therefore, more research needs to be done surrounding disability in the Gulf. "Praise and Thanks be to God: Public and Religious Descriptions of Disability in Kuwait" is a significant study by Kuwaiti Disability studies scholar Hussain AlEnaizi in which he considers stigmatizing views about disability in Kuwait. In his work, he argues that the negative portrayals of people with disabilities in Kuwait is found everywhere: in the media and television shows, in cultural ideologies and phrases that label disability as punishment, and religious connotations that consider disability tragic or a test of faith (2019). Kuwaiti culture is generally conservative with Islamic beliefs as the dominant ideology and as AlEnaizi states, "any loss of hearing or sight would be perceived as a deviation from perfection or normality. This makes religious people constantly thank and praise God for having a healthy body, especially when they see ill or disabled people" (68). Phrases such as "praise and thanks be to God" are used to express gratitude that one is not sick, disabled, or struggling with any deviation from the social norms. This stigmatization of ill and/or disabled bodies is constant and goes unnoticed by many abled-bodied people who do not see an issue with uttering these words directly, even in front of an individual with a disability. With the generally negative social attitudes to disability in Kuwait, it becomes difficult to embrace a disabled identity or to speak/write about disability without societal consequences. Although these consequences can include further stigmatization and questioning of the "goals" behind writing these life narratives, the quest of writing these narratives is one that Helene Cixous calls for in *The Laugh of the Medusa*.

Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa* is a seminal text that explores women's writing, voice, and agency. Cixous' interest in women's writing continues to be relevant to contemporary women's writing and is universal in its considerations of using the body as a medium of communication in patriarchal societies that oppress women and repress their voices. She urges women to write their narratives:

> Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement (875)

Cixous's uncovering of patriarchal oppression offers women a way out through writing, through resisting the ways women have been silenced and marginalized. While Cixous does not deal with disability, disability is a necessary part of the conversation. Women's bodies are oppressed in phallocentric discourse, muted, and disabled women's bodies are doubly marginalized and silenced. Abled-bodied women struggle to write themselves into the patriarchal discourse and the literary canon. Disabled women's narratives (especially in the Gulf) are unheard of. Cixous' concept of *Écriture feminine* (women's writing) is still relevant today and I will argue that writers who write about their bodies, disabilities, and illness, are writing their life narratives following Cixous' calling. Life narratives that deal with taboo subjects will amplify Kuwaiti women's voices and to reclaim their voices and bodies, women must write. As such, life narratives are an essential contribution to understanding how disability operates in Kuwaiti society. Embodied knowledge and experience can be used in writing about one's life (through autoethnography or illness narratives) to fill 'experiential "gaps"' (Ellis,

2014: 262). As an author writing about disability, my aim was to contribute to the immense gap of literary and academic scholarship concerning women's experiences with disability and illness. Almajed's work and mine reflect this urge to fill "experiential gaps" although the texts are written in differing and overlapping mediums.

Another pressing issue is the choice of writing in English; both Almajed and myself chose to write in English rather than Arabic. Using a second language to write might provide some distance from the actual traumata of illness, but also, it is a form of self-censorship. Because English is not as widely read locally as Arabic, these narratives do not gain as much scrutiny. Mostly, they are unheard of except by an English-reading audience. More studies need to be done regarding Kuwait's readership and preference for Arabic books (Kaposi and Alshammari, 2021). These two texts are important in that they are starting multiple narratives by and about Gulf women, regardless of the language they are written in. Language is not the only question when it comes to write a life narrative, and yet, for writers choosing to write in English, they are faced with questions of 'betrayal' of the mother-tongue.

To begin with, *Notes on the Flesh* is my biomythography. This chosen genre is not arbitrary, although some scholars and readers have thought it to be a random choice. Because of the stigmatization of illness and disability in Kuwaiti society, an English biomythography becomes necessary to expose discrimination. According to Floyd-Thomas and Gilman:

> Biomythography, a term first coined by Audre Lorde in her personal testimony, *Zami*, can be defined as a "deliberate amalgamation of autobiographical fact and mythically resonant fiction" that locates the struggle for moral agency and self-identity in a context of social oppression. (2005: 184)

Drawing on black feminist scholarship and specifically Audre Lorde's work on illness narratives, in *Notes* I utilizes the concept of a biomythography to trace the materiality of the body and narrate cultural stigmatization of illness. Because of its blurring of genres, the text is hybrid in its experimentation with form and narrative. The blending of fact and fiction allows room for distance from my life, rather than being a straight-forward memoir. According to Michael Benton in "Literary Biomythography", the blending of fact and fiction is related to aspects of myth-making:

> (Biomythography) alters our perceptions of the genre by acknowledging that the biographer is dealing both with historical data and with the self-projections of the author in his or her life and literature (207)

Generally, for Arab women autobiographers, and for Gulf women more specifically, life narratives involve an exposure of the self and body which goes against the traditional norms of hiding the female body. When Arab women writers choose to write their selves and bodies, they are going against a culture that emphasizes the need for concealment and keeping women's bodies outside the public sphere. Although contemporary Kuwaiti society upholds many modern values, traditional values are still at play within the larger social context. As such, expressing these 'self-projections' within the larger community necessitated relying on the blending of the genres of fact and fiction. Fiction offered me more discretion in discussing topics surrounding women's bodies and allowed me room to create fictional characters that were drawn from my experiences. In a sense, composite characters allowed me room to explore writing a life narrative through the creation of an alter ego to serve in my place when necessary.

An alter ego is used to assist me in creatively exploring potentials of different characters that are built from my experiences, while still telling parts of the truth.

Notes on the Flesh deals with issues of disability, women's place within Kuwaiti society, and trauma. It deals with my experience of being a disabled woman growing up in Kuwait. The text presents the dilemma of marriage for Sarah (the alter ego I employ) who gets rejected multiple times because of her disability. Sarah's hybrid body leaves her in an ambiguous state of being, an in-between state, between abled-bodied and disabled. She also struggles with language as she begins to stutter. Sarah feels as though she cannot belong anywhere, exiled from within her body and from home. Because her mother is Palestinian and her father is Kuwaiti, she finds herself struggling to be accepted within Kuwaiti society (Al-Shammari 2017). The racial discrimination against Palestinians began after the Gulf War, when Palestinians faced mass deportations and most Palestinians ended up having to leave Kuwait, their home for decades. Sarah's shock with the racial discrimination, bullying, and prejudice against her mother and all Palestinians is voiced throughout the articulation of her memories post-war:

> What happened was that an entire nation was shocked, a nation was traumatized…I started stuttering in public because speech was no longer safe…Slowly, language was used as a weapon. All around me was hate. (36)

The traumata of war, language and discrimination, as well as the sudden disability leave Sarah (and the author) in a position that seeks to find self-expression and freedom in narrating the body. Sarah's conflict with occupying a hybrid identity is further intensified with the diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, which leaves her body disabled and her sense of identity shaken. To suddenly become disabled is part of the non-linearity of narrative (and life). According to Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller*, "Disease happens in a life that already has a story, and this *story* goes on, changed by illness but also affecting how the illness *story* is formed" (54). This interruption in one's life narrative calls for an act of re-claiming the ill person's voice, re-writing the narrative to include the presence of illness and its chaotic entrance into one's life. Medical doctors and family members may not listen to the ill person's voice, which Frank terms "medical colonization" (10). In the same vein, women's struggle to be heard is compounded with medical colonization. The only way to re-claim agency over one's narrative of illness is to write against the dominant narrative of disabled and ill women as voiceless, spoken for, and shunned. For instance, the narrator's father speaks for at the doctor's office, and the doctor ignores her complaints (*Notes* 37). As the diagnosis of MS is the inciting incident of the narrative, the journey towards comprehending the acquired disability is chaotic and fragmented. Many times, Sarah feels invisible and unheard: "I felt invisible, just like I had felt at the doctor's office" (39). The narrator in pain must find the words to articulate the experience, to bear witness to it, and still form a narrative that pays attention to women's disabled bodies, voices, and lack of control of their lives. To write of this embodied experience meant allowing myself room to revisit the bodily pain and construct a verbal narrative from a visceral one.

After narrating my experiences with disability, the narrative shifts to fictionalized experiences of different narrators. In *Notes on the Flesh*, not all disabilities are the same, and not all of them are centered on female protagonists. In one of the stories, Salem, whose name ironically is a synonym for healthiness, must bear the burden of society's rejection of him as a disabled man. Salem is unable to have a fulfilling life, become married, and is seen as less than abled-bodied men. Although his experiences are less traumatic than the disabled women's experiences in the

narratives, he must still contend with society's discrimination and toxic masculine ideologies. The narrative continues to juxtapose gendered experiences of disabilities in Kuwait, with a creation of characters that are fictional and fall under the "myth-making" aspect of biomythographies. The narrative's blending of fiction and nonfiction leaves it at a juncture between genres, similarly to Sarah's position in Kuwaiti society. My exposure of the discrimination that takes place against disabled people is seen through the eyes of multiple characters who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, genders, and disabilities.

In the same vein, medical doctor and author Fejr Almajed exposes society's oppression of people living with mental illness by writing her autoethnography and lived experience of illness. Writing her life narrative through autoethnography as a tool is one way that women writers can challenge and blend different genres. In autoethnography, text and body become one, as the site for speaking of the body and through the body is the narrative itself. Autoethnography allows the writer to write through traumatic experiences, illness, and resist the silencing of the body. When I read Almajed's work, I was happy to find another voice that I could amplify in my scholarship and teaching. No other autoethnography of mental illness is available for comparison in Kuwaiti society and the work is significant precisely because it is the first to explore a first-hand account of mental illness and contextualize this experience amidst stigmatizing public attitudes of mental illness. As a woman, Almajed's voice is at risk of being doubly marginalized. She uses her experience to reflect on Kuwaiti society.

Because Almajed uses autoethnography for her life narrative, she is able to explore important issues that affect her personally as well as the larger collective. She explores mental illness, women's bodies, and the discipling of their bodies by society. Mental illness in Kuwait remains a largely taboo subject. People struggle to reveal their mental health needs, struggles, and are ashamed to ask for help. Physicians and psychiatrists continue to work on erasing the stigma associated with mental health, as Almazeedi and Al-Suwaidan suggest:

> By providing mental health services at the primary healthcare level, many patients will be able to get the treatment they need with minimal stigma, and this would provide an excellent opportunity for health professionals to erase this stigma, once and for all, through education. Only then will the silence of suffering be broken across this invisible barrier of shame (3).

While providing mental health services is part of the role of physicians and hospitals, I argue that another role is necessary for writers and people with lived experiences of mental illness. The medical community needs to work with individuals rather than creating a divide, and the voices that need to be recognized as part of the narrative are still very faint. This is precisely why Almajed writes her lived experience of mental illness to destigmatize society's understanding of illness as shameful. Using autoethnography as a tool to explore her lived experience, she narrates the often-difficult state of being in-between cultures and languages:

> My story… is the process of teaching the self and body how to speak and seeing what happens in the process. My position of being in transition between specific cultures, religions and careers almost at the same time is, I feel a unique one and is of sufficient magnitude to dissolve the hampering effects of logic or attempts at rationality and certainty (25).

At the time of writing this text, Almajed was positioning herself in-between cultures and transitioning between her career as a medical doctor and a psychotherapist, amidst navigating

her own mental health difficulties and trying to ascertain what is 'real' and what is 'rational.' Teaching her body to speak after years of indoctrination of silence and submission to the patriarchal ideologies at home is an act of constant warfare, of imagining and re-imagining her body's life narrative. To teach her body (and self) to speak, she must unlearn ways of subjugation, shame, and silence. This is a long process as evident in the writer's hesitancy to learn new methods of speech that can shame her in public spaces. Almajed considers various ways by which oppression can operate in personal, private spaces as well as public spaces. As she navigates her beliefs (which are often at odds with traditional Kuwaiti society), she formulates new definitions of voice. This voice is fragmented, confused, and at times, confusing for the reader. Reading and deciphering her narrative proves to be a difficult task, as the writing style oscillates between bouts of creativity that defy linear narratives, and certain gaps in the chronological order of the text. But it is through this chaotic writing technique that she is able to speak against "logic" and "attempts at rationality", breaking away from a more traditional and linear narrative. This non-linear narrative allows for more potential for diverse and different experiences of life and illness. It is more authentic in its depiction of mental illness than fictional accounts that aim for a resolution of illness and a satisfying conclusion. According to Nawar Al-Hassan Golley, the female autobiographer may use multiple ways of narrating her life, and has to "excavate those elements of the "female self" which have been buried under the cultural and "patriarchal" myths of selfhood: in order to invent a more "authentic" image, the she/autobiographer has to invent her own myths and metaphors; by so doing she is engaged in a process of shaping her own self too (60). Golley's suggestion of a more "authentic" image ties in with Almajed's depiction of narrating her life through a series of conversations, images, and moments that attempt to speak back to the patriarchal myth of women. By writing her own body, she is engaging in a revolutionary act of protest, of uncovering the buried self, and carving out a new "authentic image." She writes in a polyphonic voice:

> They are mostly stories of survival, of social activism, of coping successfully. I don't know where my story fits in that. Is there even a voice or to put it more accurately, voices in my work...I feel like I have lost my voice" (37).

Like Sarah's feeling of being invisible and unheard in *Notes on the Flesh*, Almajed writes about losing one's voice and being silenced by patriarchal society and the medical community. Both patriarchal society and the medical community attempt to speak for her, to diagnose her, to keep her voiceless and silent. Cixous urges women writers to find their voice and she recognizes that when women speak, they are challenging the public and patriarchal discourse:

> It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem (881).

Almajed breaks the silence surrounding mental illness in her society and opens up dialogue with others by placing her life's narrative within the readers' hands. She offers a testimony of mental illness, breakdown, and the rupture that happens to her life (psychotic episodes). Following Cixous insistence on resisting the marginalized and enclosed spaces regulated for women, Almajed offers her testimony as an activist approach to life writing and illness:

> My very real terror at being discredited by exposing myself in this way is something I have had to work against in writing this autoethnography and I feel that not talking about this terror is in many ways a betrayal to my experience (68).

To write about Kuwaiti women's lives and experiences with their bodies, mental illness, and disability is a transgression, an uncommon act that had not been seen in Kuwaiti society before. Almajed's primary concern with being discredited is a conflict that she chooses to resolve by writing through the fear and conflict, offering her life's narrative as testimony. For her, writing becomes a site of resistance, against both society and her upbringing. She chooses to bear witness to the traumata, as Frank contends that the wounded storyteller must tell their story as an ethical practice of testimony: "Illness stories are told by bodies that are themselves the living testimony; the proof of this testimony is that the witnesses *are* what they testify" (140). Testifying, then, becomes an important act of resistance and a choice to work through the fear of being stigmatized, discredited, and devalued.

Frank's assertion that illness stories are valuable is important for Gulf women writers, and in this case, for Kuwaiti women writers who tell their illness narratives and write their voices and bodies to testify, to bear witness to the lived experience of illness. Almajed makes the conscious choice to write her life narrative using various techniques to bear witness: "In autobiographies, the writer writes retrospectively and, in the process, uses materials such as diary entries, pictures, recording and photography to write" (75) Looking at one's life narrative through diverse media allows the writer space to express and explore the chaotic turns, ruptures, and moments that have formed (and deformed) their sense of self retroactively. Memories and diary entries allow room for the writer to pause and reflect on certain moments in their narrative that have positioned them in the current place they find themselves in. Autoethnography as a technique allows the writer to observe, scrutinize, and reflect on their positionality in their life's narrative and society. Almajed ends her work by expressing the hope taht it bears witness to the trauma and presents first-hand accounts of Bipolar Disorder:

> I would hope that recourse to an alternative storyline may be of use in empowering and giving choice to these women, as it has to me, as well as people from marginalized communities who might see parallels between their stories and mine (103).

Alternative storylines are necessary when considering illness narratives, and reclaiming agency over one's life begins through speaking and writing. These alternative storylines are necessary and need to be part of the conversation of women's life narratives. They do not follow a traditional *Bildungsroman* narrative and there is usually more breakdown and breakthrough rather than a certain expected resolution to the narrative.

While these life narratives offer much to consider, there remains a scarcity of life narratives available in the Gulf region. My next attempt at rectifying this gap in the literature is the publication of my memoir *Head Above Water: Reflections on Illness* (2022). Finding a publisher interested was a difficult process, as many publishers felt the experience of disability was not universal, and rather "too specific." This was a daunting and disappointing realization, to find out that life narratives have to be narrated in a certain way, with an expected resolution at the end of the narrative. Where did disability and illness fit in? What of these voices that are difficult to contain in fixed and linear narratives? After many rejections, *Head Above Water* finally found a home: Neem Tree Press, a small and independent British Press interested in international literature and diversity. The work is different from my earlier work, *Notes on the Flesh*, because it expands my experience with disability to feature my academic life as a

disabled teacher. It is an exploration of what it means to navigate life as a disabled teacher and researcher and narrates the conflicts and stigmatization of disabled bodies in society and the academy. As more needs to be done to explore life narratives by Arab women, I was immensely grateful to have found Radwa Ashour's memoir: *Athqal min Radwa* (*Heavier than Radwa*). The late Egyptian academic wrote about her struggle with cancer and navigating her academic career as well as the various political upheavals in Egypt. To date, this is the only memoir by an Arab woman (also an academic) that chronicles her illness and the difficulties surrounding the performance of being an abled-bodied academic. Ashour's work influenced mine and I began to consider questions of life writing and academia. How are our career narratives written and performed? How do we create an academic self that fits the expectations of the academy? What of the measurement of success? How do we measure success when the body is ill or disabled and yet the academy demands the same amount of research, teaching, and service? How are we to forge new identities away from the academy? What happens to a life interrupted? These are questions that I raised in the memoir as I began to consider the gap in the literature available about academia and Arab disabled women. Disability life narratives are still scare and the journey is just beginning.

Both *Notes on the Flesh* and *In/coherence* offer life narratives marked by disability and illness to a public audience, a readership that has not found similar experiences voiced by Kuwaiti women's narratives. By offering these stories to others, readers are able to read, listen carefully, and find parallels in their own experiences. These alternative life narratives are othered and marginalized, but by bringing them forward, we (the authors) are re-centering them as necessary life narratives that need to be articulated. Because of the invisibility of Kuwaiti women's illness narratives and disability experiences, listening to these voices and amplifying them is necessary. According to Frank:

> The voices of the ill are easy to ignore… these voices bespeak conditions of embodiment that most of us would rather forget our own vulnerability to. Listening is hard, but it is also a fundamental moral act; to realize the best potential in postmodern times requires an ethics of listening (25).

When Frank suggests that "listening is hard" I consider this an accurate diagnosis of the lack of interest in the Gulf in disabled life narratives. An ethics of listening is also tied to an ethics of amplifying these voices, thereby considering their work as part of our understanding of Kuwait women's narratives and experiences with disability and illness. More research needs to be done concerning the lack of illness narratives and disabled protagonists in fiction and memoir. This is an area of research that remains untrodden and it is necessary to expand the scholarship of life narratives and memoir. The absence of these narratives from both creative works and literary scholarship is staggering and needs to be rectified, and we need an active ethics of listening to these voices and later to amplify them through various scholarship.

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Corresponding author: Shahd Alshammari
Email: Alshammari.s@gust.edu.kw

Spendemic: Japan's Marketing of Mythical Creatures and the Business of Selling Hope

Antonija Cavcic
The University of Shiga Prefecture, Japan

Abstract

With their roots in animism and Shintōism, Japan's mythical creatures known as *yōkai* have been feared, revered, and used to explain calamities or inexplicable phenomena. Needless to say, in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and even now to some extent, very little was known about the origins of the virus, its potency, and how it could be prevented or treated effectively. Naturally, this threw most countries in the world into a state of confusion and Japan was no exception. However, as opposed to seeking answers from conspiracy theories to make sense of the unknown, Japan turned to アマビエ(Amabié) – a mermaid-like *yōkai* known for prophesizing either an impending epidemic or an abundant harvest. While Amabié offers no explanation, advice or immediate help, it is believed that by recreating manifestations of its image, people can defend themselves against illness. Whether it was wishful thinking or simply a trend is debatable, but countless artists, city councils, product manufacturers, and shrines around the country all jumped onto the bandwagon of producing and promoting products with images of Amabié in 2020. Although their motives varied and a sense of hope certainly inspired the production and consumption of Amabié, in this article I argue that the profit factor was a major incentive for shrines and businesses who invested in the trend. I will demonstrate this by drawing upon previous research on the commodification of religion while providing examples of the commodification of Amabié by local, corporate, and secular entities.

Keywords: animism, Japan, polytheism, *yōkai*

Introduction

Japan's mythical creatures known as *yōkai* have been feared, revered, and used to explain calamities or inexplicable phenomena. Since *yōkai* have roots in animism and Shintōism, we may regard them as unique deities of Japan. If, for example, a child drowned in a river for reasons known or unknown, those who believed in *yōkai* would say that it was the doing of *kappa*, the mischievous water god. Essentially, when facing unfamiliar, tragic or inexplicable phenomena, *yōkai* myths were used as didactic tales or as a means to ease the minds of those experiencing fear and confusion. Needless to say, in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and even now to some extent, the origins of the virus were shrouded in mystery, we knew very little about its potency, and how it could be prevented or treated effectively. Consequently, this threw most countries in the world into a state of confusion and Japan was no exception. However, as opposed to seeking answers from outrageous disinformation campaigns or conspiracy theories to make sense of the unknown, Japan turned to アマビエ(Amabié) – a mermaid-like *yōkai* known for prophesising either an impending epidemic or an abundant harvest. While Amabié offers no explanation, advice or immediate help regarding the nature of the disease, it is believed that by recreating its image and distributing it, people can somehow defend themselves against illness. Perhaps it was wishful thinking or simply a trend, but from early 2020 through to at least early 2022, countless artists, city councils, product manufacturers, and shrines across Japan all jumped onto the bandwagon of creating and promoting products with images of Amabié. Although their motives varied and a sense of hope certainly inspired the production and consumption of Amabié, I argue that the profit factor, achieved through the commodification of religion, was a major incentive for shrines, businesses, and public entities who invested in the Amabié boom. I will demonstrate this by drawing upon notions of the commodification of religion while providing examples of the commodification of Amabié by secular, corporate, and public entities in 2020 through to late 2021.

Historical Background – Who or what is Amabié?

Prior to discussing of the commodification of religion, I will briefly introduce and clarify some essential points about Japanese *yōkai*, Amabié, animism and Shintōism. As noted earlier, *yōkai* are Japanese mythical creatures which have roots in animism and Shintōism. They are feared, revered, and have been used to explain calamities or inexplicable phenomena such as mysterious drownings, earthquakes, or severe contagious diseases. Animism, although a complex idea, basically refers to "a range of different phenomena, entities, representations, beliefs, and practices, ranging from ideas of an animated nature […] to accounts of different types of 'spirits' (*tama* 霊 or *tamashii* 魂) – often not clearly distinguished from gods (kami 神), ancestors (*senzo* 先祖), ghosts (*yūrei* 幽霊), and monsters (*yōka*i 妖怪)" (Rambelli, 2020, p.3). According to professor of Japanese religion and cultural history Fabio Rambelli, "these intangible entities belong to different, but partially overlapping, cultural spheres (religion, folklore, customs, the arts) and have different origins and cultural genealogies" (2020, p.3). Simply put, animism is the belief that there is a spirit within all material and immaterial phenomena. That is, anything from the toilet you sit on to the words printed in a conference booklet essentially has a spirit. As noted, *yōkai* are just one of the manifestations of these spirits. This belief of spirits in the natural world is also deeply rooted in Shintōism. Shintō, which literally translates to "The Way of the Gods," is an indigenous religion of Japan with an "intense and comprehensive relationship with nature" (Kobayashi, 2001, p.94). What is more significant, in regards to Amabié and contagious diseases, is that "the awe and reverence that

Japanese feel towards nature come from that fact that the elements of nature have two aspects: destructive and protective" (Kobayashi, 2001, p.89).

COVID-19, with its devastating effects and the dismal reports of deaths and daily new cases, illustrates the "destructive" element of nature. When little is known about destructive new phenomena, it is natural to search for answers, means to explain or handle them – and that is how the usage of the *yōkai* Amabié came to fruition. According to Kashiwagi Kyōsuke, a specialist on Japanese folklore, there are four kinds of rituals related to contagious diseases or epidemics that either ward off, prevent, treat, or isolate the epidemic in case (Kashiwagi, 2021). Rituals or beliefs surrounding Amabié, for instance, lean more towards warding off or preventing the illness than treatment or total containment.

Amabié was first documented in May 1846 in an early form of newspaper known as a 瓦版 (*kawaraban*). Accompanied by an account of an officer who spotted it, the image and story of Amabié describes a mermaid-like creature emerging from the sea and prophesying a good harvest; yet, at the same time, it added, "Should an epidemic come, draw me and show me to the people" (Alt, 2020). This simply suggested or implied that by replicating and reproducing images of Amabié, one can somehow avoid or prevent an illness at hand. While its efficacy is certainly something to speculate about, it is not unlike the Shintō custom of carrying around domino tile-sized お守り (protection charms) a custom still practised to this day. Much like this practice, the cultural resurgence of Amabié images from 2020 onwards became a modern reappropriation of the original Edo period custom.

Figure 1
Kawaraban featuring Amabié, May, 1846

Note: Image courtesy of Kyoto University Library Archives, Japan.

Theory – On the Commodification of Religion and Polytheism's Role

While it is difficult to gauge whether purchasing and displaying protection charms or images of Amabié guarantees any protection, I argue that notions of hope, faith, and belief (or not refuting the existence of otherworldly creatures) are central to our understanding of the cultural appropriation of Amabié. This was acknowledged by the chief priest of Kyoto's Byōdō-in temple who replicated 800 copies of an image of Amabié which he had found at the temple.

When asked why, he stated, "I want to alleviate people's anxiety, even just a little" (Edo jidai no kawaraban, 2021). From this statement, it is clear that even the chief priest acknowledges that the efficacy of the practice is dubious, but giving hope and having faith is the least we can do. Although acts like this can be considered well-intended offerings, I argue that the majority of places of worship, as well as businesses and local governments, exploited what they perceived was a trend and more or less capitalised on people's anxieties or need for any manifestation of hope. This process is what is generally considered to be "the commodification of religion." The commodification of religion simply refers to religious symbols becoming commodities. In greater detail, it can be understood as

> a process of recontextualisation of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture. In this process, religious symbols become commodities, objects of consumption readily available in the supermarket of religion and the media landscape. The commodification of religion works on several levels. The two most obvious are the (often commercial) offers of blessings, prayers and so on through the purchase of religious artifacts, books and other material products. The second important – and obvious – level is the attachment of religious values through a religious aesthetic to consumer products.
>
> (Ornella, 2013)

In regards to images or products bearing images of Amabié, through my research I have observed both levels of commodification. For instance, while some purchased protection charms at certain shrines, others bought a refreshing IPA or cider with Amabié-inspired logos. There exists an immense variety of examples of the commodification of Amabié that I will discuss in the following section. However, the commodification of religious rituals and customs is nothing new in Japan. Indeed, the evolution of Christmas and Easter celebrations in Japan have often been a subject of intrigue for Western critics. Anthropologist Brian J. McVeigh, for example, described Christmas in Japan as a perfect example of a much-repeated cultural cliché:

> [T]he Japanese tendency of adopting foreign forms while dispensing with content, of appropriating appearances while ignoring cultural meaning. It is also a good example of the commercialisation of tradition. Shoppers and passers-by have their senses bombarded by a dizzying array or green and red store displays.
>
> (McVeigh 2013, p.136)

Furthermore, Malaysian academic and politician Syed Hussein Alatas also observed that in the south-east Asian context in general, "in the case of the great world religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism […] one can suggest that in some places they are neutral, in some places they encourage, but nowhere do they hinder modernisation and economic development" (Alatas 1970, p.270). Needless to say, as a G7 member and one of the top economies of the world, Japan is no stranger to modernisation and economic development. In a sense, one could argue that Japan is a breeding ground for the commodification of religion and especially religious rituals. Owing also to polytheism, the commodification of religion is perhaps less of an issue in Japan than in monotheistic cultures. Polytheism can loosely be described as "believing in multiple gods, often from distinct religious traditions" (Gries, Su, & Schak, 2012, p.623). In Japan's case, it is said that its polytheist traditions are rooted in Shintōism as well as Ainu culture and its respective belief in myriads of deities (*kamui*) rather than a single divine power (Eto, 2015, p.229). The significance of this factor is that it allows for the worship of multiple and multitudes of deities, and therefore fosters an environment in which one can freely

pray to whichever god one chooses. I argue that due to this lack of exclusive devotion to only one god, when a spirit or divine creature is culturally appropriated or commodified, one is less likely to be offended. I will exemplify how this has been done with the commodification of Amabié in the following section.

Findings: The Commodification of Amabié

To discuss the various manifestations of the commodification of Amabié, I divided the nature of commodification into three types: secular-based (related to religious institutions), corporate-based (related to businesses), and municipal-based (related to local towns, prefectures or councils). While some images of Amabié like rice paddy art were not available for purchase, since they inadvertently encouraged tourism and social media hype (in terms of access counts, clicks and likes), they can also be considered "profitable" ventures.

Corporate-Based Commodification

If you type 'アマビエ' into Amazon Japan's search bar, you will find that there are at least over 2000 different Amabié items available for purchase. The most commonly searched terms in my search bar in January 2022 included Amabié, Amabié-candy, -sweets/snacks, -stickers, -merchandise, -labels, -ornaments, -T-shirts, -stamps, -protection charms. Naturally, this varies based one's search history, but as well as images, it is clear that there are a range of consumable items too. Folklorist Akihiro Hatanaka also observed that the In February 2020, the Twitter hashtag #アマビエチャレンジ (Amabié challenge) elicited an onslaught of different commercial products such as Japanese sweets, steamed buns, *dorayaki*, rice crackers, donuts, cookies, various types of alcohol, labels for soft drinks, key holders, straps, and masks. Hatanaka suggests, that this is proof that Amabié invaded and penetrated the lives of Japanese people in the 21st century (Hatanaka, 2021). Aside from these consumables and everyday items, some companies went to great lengths to produce life-sized gold leaf statues of Amabié or a giant Amabié bouncy castle (see Figures 2 and 3). Much like being offered protection by seeing and distributing images of Amabié (and implying that the major incentive of producing the golden statue was to increase profit), one PR officer suggested that, "[o]ne could reap profit just by looking at the statue's golden glittering, and luxuriously powerful appearance" (PR Times, 2021a). From comfort food to accessories to giant inflatable castles or to shimmering golden statues, it is evident that most companies had their own benefit, rather than benevolence, in mind when exploiting the Amabié boom.

Figure 2
SGC Co,.Ltd's Golden Amabié (PR Times, March 1, 2021)

Figure 3
Yamaguchi Taiki's Co,. Ltd's Amabié Bouncy Castle

Secular-Based Commodificiation

In contrast to the corporate sector, at shrines, temples and other places of worship, anything from the coins tossed into the *saisen-bako* (donation box) to protection charms (as objects of worship) are considered "donations" and are therefore untaxed. Since Japanese corporate tax law classifies religious corporations as "public interest corporations," they are regarded as organisations that benefit the public. Basically, a public interest corporation is established exclusively for the purpose of public interest and not for profit, and even if they reap profit from their activities, it does not belong to any particular individual (Miki, 2019). In legal discourse, it is difficult to argue that the secular-based commodification of Amabié is profitable. However, it cannot be denied that both benevolence and benefits are factors in the production and sale of Amabié-related religious paraphernalia. From avid shrine-hoppers to lifestyle bloggers to major travel websites in Japan, they all have published countless posts about shrines and temples where Amabié-related amulets, seals or protection charms could be found (Jalan, 2020; Joy of Living, 2021; Myjinja, 2021). While some shrines' amulets and seals were even featured on television (such as those from the Tomita-Wakamiya shrine in Figure 4), other shrines went to even greater lengths to produce original non-purchasable items. For instance, the Gosenhachimangu shrine in Niigata was decorated with Amabié wind chimes which, as a result, attracted both locals and tourists (Niigata Nippō, 2021). Other shrines decorated their traditional festival floats such as Fukuoka's *hakata gion yamakasa* float which was displayed in the local shopping arcade (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2021); or Niigata's Sasanomiya shrine's festival float, which was carted around town to pray for an end to the pandemic (Jōetsu Myoko Town Jōhō, 2021a). Although these activities do not explicitly involve monetary transactions, given that the location of the floats were around town or in shopping arcades, they have the potential to stimulate economic activity in the local community. One of the more ambitious ventures was Enoshima shrine and Space BD Co.'s "Space Delivery Project," which essentially launched a blessed Amabié aluminum plate into space (PR Times, 2021b). Not only did this project attract media attention, but the collaboration between corporate and secular entities arguably reflects the openness of secular entities in Japan to promotional and even profitable activities.

Figure 4
Tomita-Wakamiya shrine's Seal, Ito

Figure 5
Kikukawa City's Rice Paddy Artwork, (NHK, June 13, 2021)

Municipal-Based Commodification

Although the allure of Amabié-related religious paraphernalia may have encouraged the commodification of religious tourism by drawing visitors to a limited number or shrines which offered unique Amabié items, municipalities also invested in attractions that were likely to attract media attention and tourists. Perhaps banking on the idea that attractions outdoors would be more Covid-safe, many towns decided to produce large-scale artwork in parks, rice paddies (see Figure 5), and snowy mountains. For instance, Tomioka city in Hyōgo prefecture arranged one million tulips to create a visual depiction of Amabié (Hyōgo Shimbun, 2021); Oota city in Gunma invested in LED winter illuminations which featured Amabié (47News, 2021); Nagaoka city in Niigata created a three-metre tall ice sculpture of Amabié (Niigata Nippō, 2021b); Niigata city created massive straw art sculptures of Amabié (Midorikawa, 2021); and Shizuoka's Kikukawa city similarly created rice paddy artwork featuring Amabié (NHK, 2021). Smaller-scale projects such as Hyōgo's Fukuzaki city's Amabié bench (Itō, 2021) and Shiga prefecture's "Biwaichi Amabié Cycling Plan 2021" (Cycle Sports, 2021) both encouraged local citizens to get out and get some fresh air or purchase hotel and cycling tour packages which included limited edition Amabié-motif rice crackers and amulets. The significant point here is that the monetary transactions or revenue gained from such events or promotions is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, in terms of public relations and putting one's town on the map, such activities undoubtedly drew media attention and possibly tourists or

locals who inevitably spent money around town. For instance, when in 2019 Zenkōji temple in Nagano City invested in winter illuminations, the economic ripple effect was estimated to be around 1.4 billion yen (Nikkei, 2019). This included those who visited Nagano City for a day and also those who stayed overnight. Evidently, by creating a spectacle, albeit commodifying religious deities in the process, local governments can stimulate economic activity both on-site on online. Furthermore, since such projects are not explicitly marketed as what we could consider "religious tourism," organising committees can arguably avoid criticism or complaints about exploiting religious figures for their benefit.

Conclusion

If we accept Ornella's idea that the commodification of religion involves the "recontextualisation of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture" (Ornella, 2013), then it is obvious that not only secular, but private and public entities appropriated the symbol of Amabié as well as the flexibility and openness associated with such polytheism. Through this process, I argue that Amabié has been treated in a similar fashion to ゆるキャラ (mascot characters) – that is, it is dispensable and ephemeral and yet proves indispensable for creating media hype, stimulating economic activity and revitalising local communities. It is doubtful whether replicating and distributing images of Amabié prohibited the devastating impact of the pandemic, but as both a product of hope and a source for it, perhaps this hope is its greatest benefit to Japan when trying to ride out the storm of turmoil and uncertainty.

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Corresponding author: Antonija Cavcic
Email: cavcic.a@shc.usp.ac.jp

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